



Is Hume a skeptic with regard to practical reason?

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IS HUME A SKEPTIC WITH REGARD TO PRACTICAL REASON?

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Abstract

In philosophical discussions, it is entirely traditional to accredit *skepticism about practical reason* to David Hume. This thesis deals with questions of what exactly one might have in mind when talking about practical reason and what skepticism about it might entail. Three accounts of practical reason are provided, as the concept is by no means clear-cut. As the thesis deals with David Hume specifically, two readings of Hume's *Treatise of human nature* are presented, along with an analysis of selected sections of Hume's own work. My conclusion is that an alternative interpretation of Hume's work, as well as a careful examination of the concept of practical reason might offer reasons to doubt that Hume is in fact as skeptical about the role of reason as is often maintained. However, differences on the way in which practical reason is viewed, as well as ambiguities in Hume's own work have provided ample material for further debate. My hope is that this thesis might be a contribution to that debate.

Útdráttur

Skoski heimspekingurinn David Hume er gjarna talinn til þeirra fræðimanna sem helst efast um möguleika *verklegrar skynsemi* til að hafa áhrif á athafnir manna. Í þessari ritgerð er gerð tilraun til að svara spurningum er lúta að því hvað hugmyndin um verklega skynsemi feli í sér, og um leið hvað átt er við þegar talað er um efahyggju um hana. Verkið fjallar sérstaklega um David Hume, og í því augnamiði að komast að því hvort Hume sé í raun efahyggjumaður um verklega skynsemi skoða ég tvær ólíkar túlkanir á kenningu Humes. Helstu niðurstöður eru þær að í ljósi ólíkra hugmynda fræðimanna um verklega skynsemi, og í ljósi túlkunaratriða sem snúa beint að textum Humes, er erfitt að segja til um með nokkurri vissu hvernig skuli túlka viðhorf Humes til verklegrar skynsemi. Þó tel ég ríka ástæðu til að gefa gaum að túlkun á Hume sem gæti gefið til kynna að hugmyndina um Hume sem efahyggjumann að þessu leyti megi vel taka til endurskoðunar.

Foreword

This M.A. thesis has been a long time in the making. My original choice of a thesis topic was quite different. I was an admirer of the American philosopher, Christine Korsgaard, and had the idea of writing an M.A. thesis where I first examined some theoretical issues developed by her, particularly in her well-known book, *Sources of Normativity*¹, and then planned to apply Korsgaard's analysis to selected Nordic feminist ethical literature.

While that seemed like a good project at the time, for one reason or another, it never got off the ground, and I eventually became interested in taking on a more theoretical topic in the area of moral philosophy. After some discussion with my thesis advisor, Mikael M. Karlsson, with whom I had taken a seminar on the subject of moral motivation (one that contained a detailed discussion of hypothetical and categorical imperatives in Kant and also contemporary writers), we concluded that an interesting topic would be to consider skepticism concerning practical reason. This was a topic that Mikael was himself working on actively and on which he had published some relevant articles (although none directly on that topic); and he was planning to teach a seminar on that very topic in the spring of 2013. We both thought that it might be interesting to be working on the same topic at the same time and sharing our thoughts.

As I started work on the present thesis, and in the light of my reading, and finding the topic to be a rather challenging one and perhaps too big for an M.A. thesis, I decided that it would be best to narrow the topic further and focus specifically upon Hume's supposed skepticism concerning practical reason, and referring to selected literature on that topic, including a detailed article by Christine Korsgaard, "Skepticism About Practical Reason"² several articles by Mikael (dealing heavily with Hume), other articles that were used as course materials in Mikael's seminar, including an important one by Jean Hampton³, and some materials developed by

¹Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; originally given as the 1992 Tanner Lectures.

²Journal of Philosophy 83:1 (1986), 5-25.

³"Does Hume Have an Instrumental Conception of Practical Reason?", Hume Studies 21:1 (1995),

Mikael for the seminar. Of course, much of the basis of this thesis is to be found in those classic philosophical works, in particular Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-1740) and Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785)⁴ that are much referred to in philosophical discussions of skepticism concerning practical reason.

Our original plan was that I would take Mikael's planned seminar as a help to advancing my thesis, but in the event I was unable to do so. In fact, I had numerous diversions from my thesis work, on account of employment and family obligations, and was considerably delayed in my progress in completing the work. I was, however, able to use Mikael's course materials and to have various discussions with him, especially about the organization of the thesis, but also about matters of substance, and was able to send him, from time to time, material to be read and critiqued.

What I finally did was to submit to him a full draft, rough and incomplete in some parts, but nevertheless a thesis draft that I composed mostly during (unfortunately) discontinuous periods during the academic year 2012-13. Afterwards, a great deal of work was put into revising and improving the thesis by both Mikael (reading, criticizing and editing) and of course especially myself (rewriting, supplementing and reorganizing). In the end, I still found myself under pressure to meet the deadlines and am not entirely satisfied with the result. Nevertheless, I have worked very hard on this thesis and have done the best that I could manage under the circumstances. In the light of this history, I feel that it is important for me to note several things. First, it is impossible to separate completely what of the content of this thesis comes originally from me and what from my thesis advisor. I have written here on several topics where ideas are presented that Mikael has explained to me and that he has been working on but has not yet published. These points are not specifically attributed to him in my text. On the other hand, Mikael is satisfied that the thesis is substantially my own work to the rather high standard that he expects of his graduate students and says that he has learned much from me in reading, and working with me on, my thesis. Second, I am in this thesis often discussing published work by Mikael himself which is part of the scholarly literature on reason and motivation, and in particular on Hume; and Mikael's views (as with most scholarly literature of this kind) are controversial. I want to make clear that

57-74.

⁴Read in English translation and called, in this thesis, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* in keeping with the title of the translation used (Allen, 2002).

Mikael in no way pushed me to agree with him; indeed, he invited me specifically to criticize his work in any way that I found appropriate. As it happens, I have found his views and his work very persuasive; so much so, that he has expressed disappointment at not being more heavily attacked. However, the points of agreement and disagreement (the former many and the latter few) have been entirely based upon my own reflection and assessment, in which I have been encouraged by Mikael, and all of my other teachers, to think as independently as possible.

Finally, I will in the foreword, use the opportunity to thank those people who specially helped and encouraged me in producing this work. My partner, Pálmar Þorsteinsson for endless support and patience, and for never complaining when I bothered him with my speculations regarding the subject, of which he has no knowledge. My son, for being the greatest and for still recognizing his mother after all the absence caused by my work on this thesis. My parents and in-laws for encouragement and assistance. My advisor, Mikael Karlsson, for going above and beyond what might be expected from a thesis advisor, and his wife, Barbara, for their hospitality during the last couple of weeks of the writing process; and for excellent coffee. Last, but not the least, I want to thank all of those who have listened to me complain in the last few months but encouraged me to keep going.

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1 Introduction

The role of reason is a persistent topic in moral philosophy. For centuries, it has been debated whether it has a role at all in directing practice and action and if so what it might be. This thesis is devoted to the question of skepticism concerning the role of reason in directing our practice, “skepticism concerning practical reason”, in particular with regard to the position of David Hume in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-1749)¹. The role of reason in directing practice has been most often discussed in connection with moral practice, and the attendant skepticism directed at moral reason specifically. Thus, moral reason and moral motivation will frequently be referred to in this work. However, the thesis is not specifically directed at the discussion of moral reason, which will be viewed simply as a special case of variety of practical reason. When, however, the focus is placed upon moral practice, then one may say that, roughly speaking, moral philosophy has been essentially divided into two opposite strands which are defined by the stance philosophers take on the issue of the role of reason. Then we have, on the one hand, those who believe that reason plays a very significant role in determining which courses of action are demanded by morality and followed accordingly; and on the other hand we have people who believe reason to have no real impact on moral conduct.

Reason is commonly divided into two separate categories; *practical* and *theoretical* reason where practical reason is the kind of reason that deals with actions. When someone denies that reason has a role to play in morals, they refer to an application of practical reason. Therefore, we say that someone who takes this position is a *skeptic with regard to practical reason*, at least as regards morals.

David Hume is typically regarded as an influential skeptic regarding practical reason. It is entirely standard to treat Hume as setting narrow limits to the

¹The edition used for the purposes of this thesis is that edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1888), and page references to the *Treatise* will simply be given a “T”, followed by the page number(s) in the Selby-Bigge edition. There are more recent scholarly editions that have become standard references; but I have found Selby-Bigge (often reprinted and widely available) to be entirely sufficient for this thesis.

1 Introduction

role of practical reason, leaving it with a very small part to play in determining, and causing, human actions. Hume's theory is quite often contrasted with that of Immanuel Kant, who is taken as an example of the opposite view, at least with regard to morals, claiming that moral action is, and should, be determined by the means of reason. The reason Kant maintains this is partly because basing morals on sentiments, or feelings, means that as soon as an agent's feeling change – and they do have a tendency to change – the demands of morality may change with them. As we would like to maintain that morals should be more stable than an agent's inclinations, there seems to be something lacking if we found morality upon inclinations or sentiments.

Kant's position challenges the authors who do not endorse it, in deeming their theories to be founded upon a weak basis, leaving no objective standard against which one might judge behavior to be morally good or bad, and implying a very radical form of moral relativism. By removing the objective basis for moral judgments, we have no standard against which behavior may be praised or criticized other than the agent's feelings and inclinations.

In the light of this criticism, many would resist the 'accusation' of being considered skeptics with regard to practical reason. However, this may be founded upon a rather narrow understanding of practical reason. The concept of practical reason is not as clear-cut as one might think. It is not obvious that skepticism with regard to practical reason in a theory of morals would entail an endorsement of radical moral relativism because it is not obvious what it means to talk about practical reason, and thereby, what it means to be a skeptic about it. It is by no means clear that a skeptic about a certain function of reason would thereby *reject* the possibility of reason playing a significant role in directing action.

Those are among the issues that will be dealt with in this thesis. I will attempt to clarify what it means to talk about practical reason, and skepticism thereof. For this purpose, I have chosen three different ways in which the concept may be understood and I will discuss each of them. The ultimate aim is to establish whether or not David Hume is a skeptic with regard to practical reason and if so, what sort of skepticism he subscribes to. I will present two readings of Hume's account, meaning that the answer to the question of whether Hume is in fact a skeptic with regard to any understanding of the concept of practical reason, might well rest upon the way in which one views Hume's theory.

Although it is traditional, in philosophical discussions, to trace skepticism

with regard to practical reason to Hume's work, that does not mean that Hume was the first skeptic about practical reason but rather that he formulated an account that has been the source of a long-standing debate. The problem with such discussions is that often it is not clear what exactly is meant by "practical reason" and thereby the idea of skepticism about it remains rather vague. Therefore, it is not obvious what it means to say that Hume is a skeptic in this regard or that he is to be considered such a skeptic on all plausible accounts of practical reason. There are various ways to define practical reason, but here we will focus primarily on three ideas in order to try to establish their similarities and differences and hopefully to get a little closer to finding out whether Hume is a skeptic about practical reason, and, if so, exactly what it is that he is skeptical about. We will begin by taking a look at what it entails to contrast practical reason with theoretical or reflective reason. We will examine the difference between theoretical and practical reason as well as two ways in which we can think about practical reason. One way is to say that reason is *practical* when it deals with matters of practice, or action, while another way is to say that reason is practical when it directs, or gives rise to, action.

From our discussion of the distinction between practical and theoretical reason, we will move on to discussing three different ways in which practical reason may be understood. Let it be noted that these are not the only three possibilities, but they are the ones most often seen and are the most relevant for a discussion of Hume, either because he takes them up himself or because his critics do. The first account we will look at is the idea of instrumental reason, reason that deals with questions concerning which actions might help us obtain our ends. This kind of reasoning is considered *practical* because it, to some extent, directs our actions and helps us decide what to do, and it is called *instrumental* since it aims at determining the means instrumental to our ends.

The second account of practical reason is the idea that reason can *move us to action*. On that account, one can be moved to act *because* one deems an action rational. This would attribute to reason something more and different than an instrumental role. The most famous account of this kind is probably the one standardly attributed to Immanuel Kant. Here, the practicality of reason has to do not so much with reasoning about practice but rather that reason itself becomes practical in the sense of being capable of directly giving rise to action.

The third and final account is the idea that reason can select our *ends* or *objectives*. This is, again, a non-instrumental application of rationality, the instru-

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mental role of reason being concerned with the selection of *means* to ends that are selected by *some other force*. This kind of practical reason is practical because it evidently guides practice. The question that remains is whether the fact that ends have been chosen rationally can motivate action, that is, whether the rational choice of objectives can serve as a motive. The rational choice of ends is then distinguished from choices that are made by other faculties. If we believe that an agent is perforce moved to achieve the ends that she has chosen through rational reflection, we would probably say that this kind of practical reasoning motivates. If, however, we believe that an agent can recognize rationally that there are certain things worth pursuing and that she thereby has a reason to pursue them but is still unmoved to do so, then this kind of practical reason is primarily practical in the sense of guiding practice but not in the sense of moving us to act.

2 Practical reason

It is common to distinguish between practical reason and theoretical reason, where the distinction lies not the least in the different subject matters the reasoning is aimed at. On the one hand we have theoretical reason, which can be viewed as deliberation about purported matters of fact, such as questions of explanation. Practical reason, however, deals with action and questions of how one should act. This distinction seems to suggest that practical reasoning aims at answering questions about what one ought to do while theoretical reasoning deals with questions of how or why certain things are. Practical reasoning, then, deals with normative choices rather than matters of fact and their explanations. Such reasoning may be more personal than theoretical reasoning, since an agent's reasons for actions may not be readily accessible or relevant to everyone. However, it is worth noting that practical reasoning can concern collective action, where a number of people jointly decide what course of action they should take, either as a group or individually. That may be explained by the fact that it is possible for people to share goals and values just as much as ideas about matters of fact; so practical reason is not necessarily completely personal, even though it may, on some cases, be based upon reasons that are not readily recognizable by others.

One ought to be careful, though, with the distinction between theoretical and practical reason since it is not clear that the difference between them is a great or a significant one. One can easily see, for example, that theoretical reason can be used to determine what one ought to believe and that seems to be a question of value as much as it is a question of fact. This happens, for instance, when we try to evaluate reasons for given beliefs or the matters of facts that underlie them. Then we could say that the difference is not so much between normative reasoning and fact-evaluating reasoning but rather about reasoning about action and reasoning about belief. We could say that theoretical reasoning, insofar as it deals with questions of belief, is capable of changing one's beliefs (Wallace, 2008). Practical reason, insofar as it deals with actions, may influence our decisions to act or give rise to action, and

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it seems that our beliefs about matters of fact should also be capable of doing that. Perhaps the difference between the two kinds of reason is not a very important one when considered closely.

Another thing worth noting is that while practical reason gives rise to action, it only gives rise to *intentional* action which we can only make sense of if we think of it in terms of a person's mental state. If we want to insist on the distinction between theoretical and practical reason, we could perhaps better describe them as producing changes in beliefs on the one hand and as shaping intentions on the other. From all this we can see that even though there seems to be a clear distinction between theoretical and practical reason, their relationship is too complex to allow us to say easily in just what ways they are distinct.

So far we have seen that there are at least two different ways of looking at practical reason. We can see it as practical in its subject matter insofar as it is a reasoning about actions, and it is practical in its consequences since it gives rise to intentional actions. That is not to say, however, that practical reasoning necessarily leads to action. It is quite possible that through the usage of practical reason one may judge that it would be beneficial to perform certain actions but still decide not to perform them. That might be because of conflicting demands made by reason itself or because of conflicting motives produced by desire or sentiment. Some might argue that this undermines the claim that practical reason necessarily has practical consequences, but it is not obvious that this is true. We might also say that practical reason produces motives to act, even though it may well be the case that an agent decides not to act on that motive. I may judge it to be beneficial for me to wake up early in order to get started on a paper, and thus have a motive to do so but might still decide to sleep in, even though it is contrary to what my practical reason commends. So even when practical reason creates a motivation for action, that motivation can be confronted with other motivations for other activities, and thus the practical reasoning may not actually lead to action even though it creates motives. It still seems that the possibility for practical reason to create motives for us to act is what sets it apart from other kinds of reasoning.

To recap, the concept of practical reason seems to be used in two different ways. On the one hand, it seems that we would use the term to describe reason that motivates in the sense of being capable of giving rise to action. In those cases, we could say that practical reason is such that it gives us reasons for action that are capable of moving us to those actions. We might judge rationally about what to do,

and that judgment is sufficient to give rise to the action in question. Another way to look at practical reason would be to say that it is reasoning about actions. That may mean many different things as there are different ways in which one might reason about actions. Here we might refer to questions regarding what actions are useful in obtaining some given ends, or questions regarding the possibility of intentional actions.

Our present task will focus on determining some of the different ways of looking at practical reason, moving on to the relationship between reason and motivation and finally, trying to establish an understanding how Hume's work should be read in this context. The subject of practical reason is not very clear or straightforward, and it seems that the answer to the question of whether Hume is in fact a skeptic about practical reason can be answered with both yes and no, depending on our understanding of the concept of practical reason. In that sense we could say that someone is a skeptic and a non-skeptic at the same time, given different conceptions about practical reason¹.

2.1 Instrumental reason

Instrumental reason is reasoning that relates means to ends. The means are thought of as the *instruments* for achieving our ends. In this phrase, *reason* refers to our capacity to figure out which instruments to employ. But what is called an *instrumental account of practical reason* includes the ideas that this means-ends reasoning is the *only* effective operation of reason in the context of practice. That means, for example, that the ends at which our actions are aimed are not chosen through the medium of reason, since reason does not have that role. The ends are chosen by other faculties, such as desires, but we determine the best ways to obtain them by using instrumental reason.

Many people interpret Hume as having such a (merely) instrumental account of reason, meaning that he believes that reason serves to discover means to ends and but denies that it has any further role, for instance, the choice or evaluation of an agent's ends or the provision of motives. Even so, there are those who doubt that this standard reading of Hume's *Treatise* is accurate. One of the skeptics is Jean Hampton, who argues in her paper. "Does Hume Have an Instrumental

¹Cf. remarks by Mikael M. Karlsson in "Skepticism", Encyclopedia of Empiricism, Don Garratt & Edward Barbanell, eds. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), pp. 396-7.

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Conception of Practical Reason?" (Hampton, 1995), that Hume does not, in fact, have an instrumental account of practical reason in the way that she believes such an account should be understood.

In this section, we will focus primarily on Hampton's description of instrumental accounts of practical reason and her more detailed account of views she associates with Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill and David Hume. It is my belief that examining Hampton's description of those views may help us to establish an understanding of how one might view the practical role of instrumental reasoning as well as serving as a tool for further analysis of Hume and Kant especially.

Hampton starts out by defining the idea of an *instrumental theory of practical reason*.

- 1) An action is rational to the extent that an agent believes (reasonably) that it furthers the attainment of an end; and
- 2) Human reasoning involves the determination of means to achieve ends, in a way described by the theory (I will say, henceforth, that using reason to determine the extent to which an action is a means to an end is an instrumental use of reason); and
- 3) These ends are in no way fixed by reason operating non-instrumentally; i.e., what makes them our ends is something other than reason (Hampton, 1995, 57).

Here, Hampton gives a systematic account of practical reason that entails that the rationality of an action is determined by whether the agent has a reason to believe it will assist her in obtaining the desired end, that human reason is what we use in order to discover those means, and that the ends are not determined by reason. In other words, instrumental reason entails simply that we use rational judgment in order to discover a way to obtain a goal that is ours in virtue of some other forces than our reason. Hampton also remarks that "[...] I will consider as instrumental all and only theories that accept these three theses. Thesis 3 is normally understood as the hallmark of the instrumental theory" (Hampton, 1995, 58). For our purposes we will accept Hampton's disclaimer and refer to instrumental reasoning in the same way as she does.

According to Hampton, Hume's claim that "reason is [...] the slave of the passions" (T 415) is a clear case where the third criterion is met since it reinforces the claim that there is something other than reason that determines our ends and that reason is to be used merely as an instrument to obtain those ends that passion

has determined. Given that Hume's theory meets the third criterion of Hampton's definition, it would be an example of an instrumental theory of practical reason.

Theories that allow for a greater role for reason, such as determining the ends of actions in addition to finding means to ends, violate the third criterion. This is the case of Kant's moral theory, since he believes reason to be both what determines the ends and provides us with the means to obtain them. For Kant, morality is directed by reason in the way that it judges our ends and determines which ones are appropriate for us to pursue. Furthermore, Kant claims that those rational judgments are sufficient to provide a motivation for us to obtain the recommended or mandated ends. Therefore, reason not only determines our ends but is also capable of moving us to action, in virtue of the fact that reason has accepted our ends. That means that for Kant, reason is the master of the passions, and renders practical reason *practical* in both of the senses distinguished earlier since on this account, reason serves both to *reflect about practice* and to *move an agent to action*. This is also true of certain other theories of reason that are not instrumental; they share the common feature of allowing for reason to take control over the determination of ends and, for some, reason is also capable of moving us to action.

Hampton's argument rests in part on the fact that she believes a naturalist would have to reject a non-instrumental view of rationality. This, she believes, is the case for Hume who "wanted to be the Newton of the science of Man" (Hampton, 1995, 58) and therefore struggled to present an account of rationality that could be accepted by the sciences. His account of instrumental reason does that, since it only deals with so-called hypothetical imperatives; and since they are framed in terms of desire-based ends, they do not present the problem of motivation that the non-instrumental accounts do. Hampton argues that Hume's theory does not endorse an account of instrumental reason, since she believes Hume was aware that an instrumental account was problematic on naturalistic grounds, which she claims that modern-day naturalists tend to overlook and accept the concept of instrumental rationality as unproblematic.

Hampton goes on to refer to J. L. Mackie's explanation of the force of hypothetical imperatives. Mackie says that when Y is the best way to obtain the goal X and the agent desires the goal X he ought to do Y . The only reason the agent should do Y is because it is causally related to X . Therefore, the *ought* in this case is a hypothetical imperative, since it rests only the desire for X but does not have any force by itself. It is clear that if it turns out that the agent does not desire

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X , or if he judges that Y is not in fact the most effective means to get there, the force of the directive of Y is removed. However, it is entirely traditional to say that if those two criteria are met, the ought-statement is valid.

What Hampton then considers is what it means to uphold such a view. What exactly is it that explains why we *ought* to follow the directive? It is true that if the agent no longer desires the end, the means aimed to provide them with the end are no longer relevant, and while the ought-statement holds as long as the agent still desires the end and as long as the means is the most appropriate way to obtain that goal. But what does that mean? How does this provide an agent with a reason that is somehow different from a desire? Hampton maintains that different theories that deal with the force of the hypothetical imperative all make a distinction between the *authority* and the *motivational force* that comes with such an imperative. For Hampton, when a hypothetical imperative gives us the most effective way to obtain an end, it is *authoritative*. However, that does not mean that it is *necessarily motivating* at the same time but if we are also moved to act on that imperative, it has motivational force as well. Hampton argues that even though philosophers commonly claim that an authoritative reason is also motivating, that is not necessarily the case, and she refers to Bernard Williams' account of what it takes for something to be a reason for action. According to Hampton, Williams maintains that "there must be a deliberative connection between the reason's directives for action, and an agent's motives" (Hampton, 1995, 60). For Williams, there are two different kinds of reasons; *internal* and *external*. The reasons that have such deliberative connections with an agent's motives are internal motives, and they are the only reasons that are capable of being reasons for actions on Williams' account. Hampton notes that while internal reasons may be reasons for action and external reasons may not be, that does not say anything about whether or not they are capable of being motives. This only tells us what it takes for a reason to be a reason for action and that does not necessarily help us in determining whether or not they can move us to action.

Williams attempts to solve that problem by introducing a variation that Hampton calls *justificational internalism*.

[...] an agent has a reason to x if and only if x -ing is connected, via deliberation (correctly performed) with an internal feature of the agent. It is opposed by Justificational Externalism, which is the view that an agent has a reason to x if x -ing can be connected, via deliberation, with

some aspect of the world which need not be, and sometimes is not, an internal feature of the agent (Hampton, 1995, 60).

It is not clear that this is sufficient to answer our question of whether reasons can also be motives, and in fact it seems that one could hold the justificational internalist view and a motivational externalist view, denying that our reasons for action must also be motives for actions. Hampton gives us as example a case where

[...] an agent arrives at the conclusion that she has to do p in order to achieve some object q which would satisfy her desire s . This reason is related to a motive (her desire s), and discovered by her in a deliberation process, so it would seem to be a reason that she has, and believes she has. But having said that, why does it follow, by virtue of the fact that it is a reason that she has and believes she has, that she is also motivated to perform p ? To say that the motivation exists requires some further argument - justificational internalism does not, by itself, provide any argument at all with respect to the motivational efficacy of reasons (Hampton, 1995, 60-61).

Hampton introduces three different views of instrumental reasoning, emphasizing the different ways their authors account for the relationship between the *authority* and the *motivation* of instrumental rationality. The question Hampton is trying to answer is how these three different authors view the relationship between the motivational efficacy, and the authority of instrumental reasoning.

The first view Hampton introduces is what she labels the *Kantian* position, where she discusses Kant's account of instrumental reasoning. We might say that Hampton has in mind Kant's view of the authority and motivational efficacy of the *hypothetical imperative*. Kant is probably most famous for his account of the *categorical imperative* but it should also be noted that Kant does recognize a component of practical reason that is not moral. A standard reading of Kant states that for Kant we act from *reason* when we carry out moral actions while other conduct, i.e. non-moral actions, are motivated by our *desires*. Hampton aims to show that this is perhaps not the case for Kant, as she believes that when we act on hypothetical imperative are not motivated by *desire* but by *reason*. Hampton argues that for Kant, a hypothetical imperative poses upon the agent a "practical necessity" and by virtue of the force of that necessity, an agent will be motivated to act. Hampton's claim is that for Kant, the *authority* of the hypothetical (or the categorical) imperative

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gives it also a *motivational force* (Hampton, 1995). Hampton quotes Kant saying:

Whoever wills the end, also wills (insofar as reason has decisive influence on his actions) the means that are indispensably necessary to it that are in his control [Ak 4:417]²Here it seems clear that Kant believes that whenever we act on an imperative, we act on reason rather than on desire.

For Hampton, the main problem here seems to be that Kant's account rests on a non-natural cause of action. The authority of the hypothetical imperative is what affects the agent, whether or not it does so directly or by some other means. That effect is unsupported by any scientific exploration of cause-and-effect, and she points out that, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant strives to defend his non-naturalist account of the motivational force of the hypothetical imperative (Hampton, 1995, 62). The naturalist view has been persuasive because it does not rest on a "magical" force that human beings are able to sense, and for Hampton, Kant's account fails to meet this standard, since his account of *instrumental reason* rests on such a magical sense just as much as his account of the *categorical imperative*. For Kant, it is the authority of the imperative that is the core motivational factor, and that, as far as Hampton can see, is what makes it untenable. It relies on humans being able to sense an *ought* and be motivated by it without this element being sufficiently grounded in the natural world. Hampton points out that while the authority of the *ought* may be based upon desire, it is not *itself* a desire and the idea of an agent being motivated by an *ought* of that kind is the reason why many have dismissed the categorical imperative as Kant describes it (Hampton, 1995, 62).

However, there seems to me to be a problem with Hampton's critique of Kant's account. What she says is correct, the *ought* is not the same as the desire; but it may be the case that the relationship between the *ought*, or the duty, and desires or inclinations is a more complex one than she envisions.

In a footnote to page 401 in his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant responds to a certain kind of criticism:

One could accuse me of merely taking refuge behind the word *respect*
in an obscure feeling instead of giving a distinct reply to the question

²This quotation is from Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785). I have used this work in English translation and, upon recommendation, have used the translation by Allen E. Wood, which he calls *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Binghamton, NY: Vale-Ballou Press, 2002). All further quotation from Kant are from Wood's edition. The standard apparatus for referring to Kant's *Grundlegung* is to use indices indicating the page number of the relevant text in volume 4 of the Akademie edition of Kant's works. This is the reference style used by wood and is followed in this thesis.

through a concept of reason. Yet even if respect is a feeling, it is not one *received* through influence but a feeling *self-effected* through a concept of reason and hence specifically distinguished from all feelings of the first kind, which may be reduced to inclination or fear. What I immediately recognize as a law for me, I recognize with respect, which signifies merely the consciousness of the *subjection* of my will to a law without any mediation of other influences on my sense. The immediate determination of the will through the law and the consciousness of it is called *respect*, so that the latter is to be regarded as the *effect* of the law on the subject and not as its *cause*. [Ak4:401]

Here, Kant discusses the categorical imperative and the *respect* for the moral law that he understands as a motive. His point is that this respect for the moral law might perhaps be called a feeling, but that were to be considered a feeling, it would differ from all other feelings in being not, like other feelings, classifiable as a form of inclination or fear but a feeling that is “self-effected through a concept of reason” [Ak 4: 401]. What exactly he means by that is not quite clear but what is clear is that respect, even understood as a feeling, would stem from our rational capacities (as an “effect”), and, in the case actually under discussion in Kant’s footnote, render our will is subject to the law through rational reflection. In other words, rational reflection would *move* us to follow the moral law. This is, of course, Kant’s discussion of the respect for the *moral law* and the *categorical imperative*. He does not say anything in this footnote about the hypothetical imperative or other instances of rational necessity; but I believe one could extend his argument so that it applies to the sort of rational necessitation associated with the hypothetical imperative as well³.

Later in the text Kant discusses the imperatives, both the categorical and the imperative, and the nature of the will and laws to a greater extent.

³The reason this is included is not that Kant’s idea is a new one. In fact, views of this kind can be found in other authors, including David Hume and Aristotle. For Hume, reason is thought to have a certain role when it comes to action by causing us to form a desire. Aristotle mentions several different kinds of desire, two of which are boulesis and epithymia. Karlsson describes epithymia as a „non-rational desire for the pleasant“ (Karlsson, 2000, 35) and boulesis as a „desire for the goods approved by reason, [...] a rational appetite“ (Karlsson, 2000, 35). Another author who makes a distinction between different kinds of desires is Thomas Nagel. According to Karlsson, Nagel makes this distinction in his book *The Possibility of Altruism*. There he refers to „motivated desires“ on the one hand and „unmotivated desires“ on the other. Karlsson claims the difference between them is that the motivated desires are desires we have a reason to have, while the unmotivated desires flood in on us.

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Every thing in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the faculty to act *in accordance with the representation of laws*, i.e., in accordance with principles, or a will. Since for the derivation of actions from laws *reason* is required, the will is nothing other than practical reason. If reason determines the will without exception, then the actions of such a being, which are recognized as objectively necessary, are also subjectively necessary, i.e., the will is a faculty of choosing *only that* which reason, independently of inclination, recognizes as practically necessary, i.e., as good. [Ak 4:412]

So far, Kant has established that the human will is practical reason by which human beings can determine what is good, and thereby, practically necessary. A little further on Kant says:

The representation of an objective principle, insofar as it is necessitating for a will, is called a ‘command’ (of reason), and the formula of the command is called **an imperative**. All imperatives are expressed through an *ought* and thereby indicate the relation of an objective law of reason to a will which in its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by that law (a necessitation). They say that it would be good to do or refrain from something, but they say it to a will that does not always do something just because it is represented to it as good to do. Practical *good*, however, is that which determines the will by means of representations of reason, hence not from subjective causes, but objectively, i.e., from grounds that are valid for every rational being as such. [Ak 4:413]

According to this passage, a *rational command* that *necessitates the will* is what we call an *imperative*. Here, Kant does not distinguish between categorical or hypothetical imperatives, and it is clear that this discussion applies to imperatives in general, whether their rational necessitation rests upon an external end or not. A few paragraphs *later*, Kant discusses the difference between the categorical and the hypothetical imperatives.

Now all imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. The former represent the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to attain something else which one wills (or which it is possible that one might will). The categorical imperative would be that one which

represented an action as objectively necessary for itself, without any reference to another end. Because every practical law represents a possible action as good, and therefore as necessary for a subject practically determinable by reason, all imperatives are formulas of the determination of action, which is necessary in accordance with the principle of a will which is good in some way. [Ak 4:414]

Kant does not specifically discuss the character of the *rational* motive for following a hypothetical imperative in the way he does for respect in the footnote to [Ak 4:401], examined earlier; but he does discuss the hypothetical imperative as imposing rational necessity on the will, so it is not unreasonable to suppose that something similar might be said about non-moral imperatives as was said in that footnote. It is tempting to say that despite their differences, Kant treats both the hypothetical and the categorical imperatives as imposing rational necessities and that, therefore, one might consider the motives proper to them as forms of respect, i.e. respect for what reason requires. In line with the footnote, they might all be considered feelings, but feelings grounded in our rational capacities. In the hypothetical cases, what reason requires, and hence the rational motivation, would be conditional upon the existence of a desire-based end; in the categorical case, not. In any case, Kant does not distinguish between them when he describes the way in which they command us in any *other* way than by saying that the hypothetical imperative rests on us wanting something else while the categorical imperative represents an action that is objectively necessary without any references to other ends [Ak 4:414].

As was mentioned earlier, Hampton claims that a naturalist would make the claim that Kant's account of the motivational force of imperatives rests upon some sort of "magic" (to borrow a term from Philippa Foot). Would the discussion of respect as a *feeling* answer Hampton's critique? If we allow that Kant's view about respect being possibly describable as a kind of a feeling that has its basis in human reasoning may also be applied to the motives underlying hypothetical imperatives, it becomes possible to think—although with considerable uncertainty—Kant means to say that we are perhaps not commanded *only* by an *ought*. I believe this might put in some doubt the skepticism regarding whether human beings can be motivated by an *ought* without any further reference to the natural world. If that *ought* may be considered as a specific kind of feeling, then the wanted reference to the natural world (which includes sentiments) seems to be present in a manner not apparent when the *ought* is considered merely abstractly. In other words, if we *ought* to do

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something because of our feelings, that are supposedly present in the natural world, that makes the case look rather different than if we *ought* to do something simply because it is commanded by reason. However, all this remains rather unclear for at least two reasons. For one thing, it is not *certain* that Kant would allow for his discussion in the footnote to be applied to the hypothetical imperative, and, even if he would, it is not certain exactly what that would mean. Kant claims that this "feeling" that respect *might* be is grounded in our rational capacities, and it is not clear that anyone who would be skeptical about the "magical" component of the categorical imperative would feel much reassured by this description. Therefore, I believe it to be unclear to what extent Hampton's critique can be answered by pointing to Kant's footnote, though I believe it to be quite significant. In any case, it may change the way in which we should view Kant's thoughts on the matter.

So far, we have seen how Hampton describes the Kantian version of the relationship between the *authority*, and the *motivational efficacy* of the hypothetical imperative, and attempted to meet her criticism of Kant's view.

The second account Hampton describes, she associates with John Stuart Mill, calling it the *Millian* view. For Hampton, on the Millian account, instrumental reasoning has only normative authority and can never serve as a motive for action (Hampton, 1995, 62). We may be provided with reasons for action, but recognizing those reasons does not thereby provide us with a motive to act. In other words, we may judge that a given course of action is appropriate for us to take in order to obtain an end that we may have, and we may thereby recognize that we have a *reason* to act in that way, *but* that does not in itself to move us to act. However, Hampton notes that the reasons we have for action may *indirectly* motivate us to act

[...] by causing the activation in us of certain desires (or any other motivationally efficacious psychological material) that motivates us to act as it directs; they cannot motivate to act by themselves by virtue of their authority⁴ (Hampton, 1995, 62).

Mill distinguishes between our capabilities to recognize what is *good* or *right* on the one hand, and our motives for acting accordingly on the other. In his *Utilitarianism* Mill discusses those issues completely separately and does not seem to make any

⁴If we read Mill in this way, it seems that we wind up with an account of motivation very similar to the one presented in this thesis, as an alternative reading of Hume's work that I associate with Mikael M. Karlsson, among others.

direct attempt to connect the two together. This has caused Mill to be thought of as an extreme motivational externalist, where there is no clear systematic connection between the agent's reasons for actions and the agent's motivation. However, *if* we read Mill in the way Hampton describes as above, where she claims that Mill's view may be read as grant instrumental reason a "causal motivational force", it is not as clear that Mill should be read as an *extreme* externalist in the manner just described. Of course, he is a motivational externalist, as that term is normally understood, but externalists may, in addition to denying any identification of, or conceptually necessary connection between, reasons and motives may nevertheless think of these as being systematically connected either by nature, socialization, or both.

The third view is the one Hampton believes is to be found in Hume's work and is what she therefore calls the *Humean* view. This view, as well as the Millian view is an externalist view on motivation, meaning that it does not necessarily follow from our judgment that x is a good thing to do that we are motivated to do it. However, it is not clear that the Millian and the Humean accounts are externalist accounts of the same sort. On the Humean view, as on the Millian view as Hampton describes it⁵, reasons are not motivationally efficacious on their own accord but are capable of influencing our motivational capacities. The role of hypothetical imperatives is to discover the relations between means and ends by using components which have been thought to belong to theoretical reasoning, namely, logical, empirical, and causal reasoning. This can never directly be what gets us to act, but it is capable of influencing what we choose to do. It can, for example, cause us to develop a desire to carry out the actions directed by instrumental reason. To support her claim, Hampton quotes Hume where he famously says 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 (T 459).

Here, Hampton notes, Hume recognizes that if reason is to be capable of moving us, it can only do so with help from our desires. It can never, on its own, move us to action. But Hampton believes Hume to go even further and reject the possibility for

⁵It should be emphasized that it is by no means clear that one must read Mill on these matters as Hampton does.

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instrumental reason to affect our actions. The example she uses to prove her point comes from this passage in Book II of Hume's *Treatise* (Hampton, 1995, 63-64).

'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. 'Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or person wholly unknown to me. 'Tis as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowleg'd lesser good to my greater, and have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter. A trivial good may, from certain circumstances, produce a desire superior to what arises from the greatest and most valuable enjoyment; nor is there any thing more extraordinary in this, than in mechanics to see one pound weight raise up a hundred by the advantage of its situation (T 416).

Hampton points out that Hume allows for an agent to choose a lesser good over a greater good without that choice being in any way irrational. Here, Hampton rightly notes, the concepts of "lesser" and "greater" goods are the key to the passage. What is needed is a way to be able to judge a good greater than another. Hampton claims that we need something more than the agent's own preferences and suggests instrumental rationality as one way to provide such a judgment. The question that remains then is "How can we determine a good to be greater or lesser than another without any reference to the agent's own preferences for either one of the goods?"

Hampton points to instrumental rationality as a way to make this judgment. She makes an example of someone who's greater good in the long run involves going to the dentist today. That is a way for the agent to avoid pain that is in store for her. The agent, however, chooses to spend the afternoon at home reading rather than going to see the dentist. In other words, the agent chooses to perform an action other than the one that is the most appropriate means to her end. Going to the dentist is a way in which to obtain a presumably more desired goal and is therefore a greater good. However, the agent can easily prefer to spend the afternoon reading. According to Hampton, Hume would maintain that *because* spending the afternoon reading is the good that is the preferred one, it is not contrary to reason to do so (Hampton, 1995, 64). Hampton claims that this example shows that it does not suffice to appeal to instrumental reason in order to determine the greater or lesser good since it is quite possible that the agent's *desire* will overrule the command of reason, leading the agent to choose an action that does not serve her greater good. However, it is by no means clear how Hampton's example is an example of

appeal to instrumental reason. It seems to me that rather than describing a failure of instrumental reason, Hampton is describing circumstances where an agent has *conflicting ends* and chooses, by virtue of her judgments of pleasure in prospect, an end that she prefers over the other.

Again, Hampton emphasizes Hume's point that reason has two ways in which it can influence our actions. On the one hand it can inform us of objects that may have pleasure in store for us, which can cause us to form a passion that motivates us to act. On the other hand it can help us realize the proper means to an end by discovering a causal relationship between them (T 459). In the latter case, reason influences our actions not because of its authority over us but rather because it is capable of judging the proper means to our ends. Also, rationality in this sense does not have an unfailing power to motivate us to action, since it is allowed by Hume that people are capable of acting against their better judgment and therefore, not to be moved by what they judge to be the greatest possible good. For Hampton, the conclusion is that for Hume we can act against our better judgment, or against the information given to us by reason, but since reason has no authority over our actions, it is not reason's motivational force that we act against. Hume phrases this quite clearly when he states that the merit or demerit of action is not derived from its conformity with reason since reason is not capable of producing or preventing any action (T 458). As has been discussed before, reason for Hume deals with establishing relations between objects and determining matters of fact. Anything that falls outside of that domain is not susceptible of rational judgment. Reason is nothing more than an informational faculty and does, therefore, not have any normative character. Hampton rightly believes that one conclusion of this is that Hume does not describe any action as irrational, even when the action does not accomplish the original goal of the agent (Hampton, 1995, 65). Reason may play an important role in the creation of a motive, since it is what we use to calculate the appropriate means to an end. But Hampton claims that for Hume, reason still has no authority over our action and can thereby never move an agent to act.

Hampton provides us with three different accounts of the authority of the hypothetical imperative. First of all, the Kantian view, according to which the hypothetical imperative has motivational force. According to Kant, means-ends reasoning imposes a rational necessity on an agent meaning that an agent that recognizes what she *ought* to do, will be motivated to do so by this recognition. This view is an *internalist* model of motivation meaning that our reason for action

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is also (or contains) our *motive*. This is what Kant famously maintains about the categorical imperative, but it seems to be the case that this holds for the hypothetical imperatives as well. Though Kant is standardly believed to accredit motivational efficacy to reason alone, as has been discussed, I believe his footnote to (Ak 401) to challenge that reading. In any case, that does not change the fact that Kant comes out as a motivational internalist as he views our reasons for actions, however they may be based, as having motivational efficacy.

The Millian account is quite different. While on that account it may be recognized that reason has certain authority over an agent but is not motivationally efficacious. That means that rationality can provide us with a *reason* for action but that reason does not serve as a *motive* for action at the same time. According to Hampton, Mill claims that reason can assist in the production of motives by exciting certain passions but cannot, on its own, motivate us to act. However, it is not clear that this is the way in which Mill should be read, and in fact, he is more commonly attributed as an extreme externalist, a view I take to be undermined by the reading presented by Hampton. On the Millian view as he is more commonly read, it does not follow from recognizing that one has a *reason* to perform a given action that one has a *motive* to perform that action: the Millian account is a very stark form of motivational externalism.

Contrasting the Humean view of instrumental reason with the Kantian and Millian accounts, we will see that they differ fundamentally on the issue of the normative authority of instrumental reason. For both Kant and Mill, reason has normative authority, meaning that instrumental rationality can provide the agent with *reasons* for action. By saying that one should do x to acquire y , the Kantian and Millian accounts would admit certain authority over the agent and they would recognize that if the agent fails to act on those reasons, the agent is susceptible to rational criticism. For Hume, reason has no such authority, and there is no irrationality involved should an agent fail to act on the reasons she has for a given action. Actions fall outside of the domain of reason in Hume's account, and so there is no rational criticism to be posed upon an agent who recognizes she has reasons to act in a certain way but chooses to act differently.

As noted, the title of Hampton's paper is "Does Hume Have an Instrumental Conception of Practical Reason?" and that question still remains unanswered. Hampton claims that due to the unauthoritative nature of the hypothetical imperative, Hume's view should not be read as an instrumental theory of practical reason,

as it violates the first clause of the definition she presents at the beginning of her paper, which has been described here. For her, Hume's rejection of the possibility of irrational action renders his account as one where it is "refuse[d] to allow reason to have *any* critical impact on human behavior at all" (Hampton, 1995, 67).

2.1.1 Skepticism about instrumental reason

So far, we have mainly considered what Jean Hampton has to say about the instrumental conception of practical reason. But her more specific interest, as indicated by her title, has to do with Hume directly and whether or not his conception of practical reason is a wholly instrumental one. Hampton points out that on Hume's account, there is nothing rationally problematic about an agent who fails to respond to hypothetical imperatives; there is nothing irrational about not acting in a way that advances our desired goal since there can never be any rational standard for human action. If we go back to Hampton's definition of an instrumental theory of practical reason we come across the necessary condition that "an action is rational to the extent that it furthers the attainment of an end" (Hampton, 1995, 57). However, a theory where there is no rational standard against which we can judge the rationality of an action evidently fails to meet this condition. Hampton claims that since, on Hume's account, actions cannot be irrational, we must allow that his theory is a rejection of the possibility that reason can influence human actions. Hampton's conclusion is, therefore, that Hume's theory is not an instrumental theory of practical reason. That is not to say that Hampton believes Hume to reject the possibility of an *instrumental role of reason*, but, she is claims that his theory does not recognize that any form of reason can be *practical*, in the sense she has in mind. For Hampton, it seems that to think of reason as practical, it must be possible to say that to act in another way than we have reason to do is *irrational*, or *contrary to reason*, and this Hume seems to almost everyone to deny, and to deny very emphatically.

Thus, even if Hume subscribes to the third (and most important) element of her definition, Hume does not, in fact, advocate what she calls an instrumental view of practical reason. I agree with Hampton that Hume does not endorse an instrumental account of reason (whether on her definition or other, similar and common views), but I do not believe this for the same reason as Hampton does. While Hampton claims that Hume's account contains *less* than would be required by an instrumental theory of practical reason, I believe that Hume's account is, in

fact, *richer* than she thinks, and that his concept of practical reason includes not only instrumental (means-ends) reasoning but non-instrumental reasoning and, although externalist, a more-than-Millian connection between reasons and motives. I therefore think that, in the end (as I shall argue) there are good reasons for ascribing to Hume a theory of, and even a belief in, practical reason in an intelligible and robust sense, even if I agree with Hampton that he does not think that reason is practical in the sense upon which she insists.

2.2 Reason as motivation

Another way of looking at practical reason has to do with motivation. In the above chapter, we discussed an account of practical reason where reason is considered to have a merely instrumental role, where the role of reason is determining means to ends. Since the role of reason is limited to determining means to ends, on the instrumental account, discussions of how those ends are constructed, why they are chosen, or by what means are left out. There is a thicker conception of practical rationality than the merely instrumental conception and on that view, practical reason can motivate us to act. This is a view typically associated with *motivational internalists* who would maintain that when an agent has a *reason* for action, that reason also serves as a *motive*. The claim is that emotions or passions are too whimsical to be a sufficient basis for moral judgments, and additionally it seems that moral action is not necessarily the action an agent has desires to do, in fact, what we judge as the morally right action in a given situation often conflicts what we would personally desire to do. In other words, people's desires can change rapidly so if morality were based on our desires it must be the case that the morally right action would change with them. Therefore, it is claimed that morality must be grounded elsewhere than in the agent's desires. What the moral rationalists claim is that when an agent performs a moral action, they act from duty or some other kind of rational motive (Karlsson, 2006, 235). It would be sufficient to motivate an agent to act to explain to a person that the given course of action was rational - that the person has a clear reason to perform it on this account of practical reason.

Another distinction that is important to make is that between reasons and motives. The difference is perhaps often ignored but it is still a difference that is important to establish. In the words of Mikael M. Karlsson

An agent's reason justifies her action in the sense of making clear why

the action is worth doing. An agent's motive is the impulse which brings an action about, or at least disposes the agent to act in a certain way (Karlsson, 2006, 253).

Here it is important to note that a motive "[...] at least disposes the agent to act in a certain way". That means that even though an agent might have a motive to act in a given way that does not guarantee that the agent will perform the action in question. It does not mean that the action will necessarily be carried out but rather that the agent will feel the impulse to act. On the other hand, the agent's reason for action will serve to justify the action. An agent that has a reason for action will understand why the action is worth doing but whether that means that the agent will necessarily have a motive to act is a more complicated matter. In other words, it is not quite clear that an agent's recognizing that she has a *reason* to something will dispose the agent to act in that way. This is the essence of the externalist claim.

Christine Korsgaard distinguishes between two different views on the relationship between reasons and motivation in her paper "Skepticism about Practical Reason" (1986). She draws on the paper "Internal and External Reasons" (Williams, 1981) where Bernard Williams marks the difference between an internalist and an externalist views on moral theory. For an internalist, the reason an agent has for an action in itself implies a motive for action. The knowledge an agent has of an action being right presents the agent with a motive to act in accordance with what the reason orders. For an externalist, the matter is quite different. It is very possible that an agent may judge an action to be right but still be unmoved to act in that way. There, knowledge or cognition is one thing while motivation is another thing (Korsgaard, 1986, 8-9). Korsgaard points out that purely externalist accounts of moral philosophy may not be easy to find, but points out the example of a person who wants to obey divine commands, regardless of the agent's own judgments about the action. The Millian account discussed in prior in this paper can be thought of as an example of such extreme, or pure externalism where there agent's reasons for action do not have any power to influence her motives for action.

A third approach to the subject is the account of the intuitionists who believed that there is in fact a distinct moral motive which is the desire the agent has for doing her duty. The motive, though triggered by the recognition that something is your duty, is still not a part of the cognition or the understanding of one's duty. The agent can understand that something is her duty and yet be unmoved by that recognition. Here the *reason* for action and the *motive* are not the same, but the

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agent feels the motivation to act because the action is right. It is a rationalist ethics but it is still distinct from the internalist account. On this view, human beings have a special kind of theoretical reason that deals with morality. That cognition is then capable of moving the agent to act due to certain psychological factors human beings have which is a willingness to do one's duty (Korsgaard, 1986, 9-10).

The contrast between those accounts is how the relationship between reason for action and motivation for action are seen. For the internalists, a reason for action is at the same time motivation for action so the reason is itself a motive. That which justifies the action of the agent also provides the agent with the impulse to act, whether it ultimately leads to action or not. For the externalists, an agent may recognize a reason to act in a given way and that reason may justify the possible action but it will not move the agent on its own accord.

The question that arises if we acknowledge that an agent's reason for action does not imply a motive for that action is "why do what I have a reason to do?" (Nagel, 1970, 9), (Korsgaard, 1986, 9-11).

For Korsgaard the possibility of a motivational force of a reason is what defines practical reason and this condition is what she calls the internalism requirement.

[...] it seems to be a requirement on practical reasons, that they be capable of motivating us. [...] So long as there is doubt about whether a given consideration is able to motivate a rational person, there is doubt about whether that consideration has the force of a practical reason (Korsgaard, 1986, 11).

It seems clear that for Korsgaard, a consideration that does not motivate should not be thought of as practical reason, meaning that a theory of practical reason, must include an account of the way in which our reasons for actions are capable of motivating us. That means that if we endorse a theory of practical reason, we must necessarily have in mind an *internalist theory of motivation*.

Now, skepticism about this kind of practical rationality is very common and is, in fact, a view that is quite often associated with Hume. For a skeptic about this kind of function of rationality, it must be allowed that what motivates our action is something other than reason. We, then, are not moved to act because of a rational judgment but because of something else like a desire or a passion. Reason as motivation is in many ways the basis for Kant's moral philosophy, and advocates of this view may maintain that if we believe human beings are incapable

of being moved by reason, we have then removed the objective basis for moral judgments. Here we can imagine a moral philosophy such as utilitarianism that bases the rightness or wrongness upon the amount of happiness produced by a given action. The actions that produce the most amount of happiness are then the actions that have the greatest moral worth. However, when simplified to this extent, there does not seem to be any standard against which the actions can be judged, other than the happiness. That means that what constitutes moral action may change according to what it is that makes people happy. The problem with that is that desires tend to change overtime and it may be argued that basing moral judgment on the feelings of a given individual undermines its authority since it may become unreliable or whimsical. For thinker such as Immanuel Kant, it seems untenable that morality may be based upon sentiments or feelings that may change, changing morality at the same time.

2.2.1 Skepticism about reason as motivation

As has been mentioned on several occasions, Hume is famous for limiting the role of reason in motivation to an *instrumental* role. On the traditional interpretation, it seems obvious that Hume does not allow for reason to be a motivating factor as he claims reason to be inert and incapable of producing any action. He also claims reason to be “[...] a slave of the passions” and all of this has added to the idea that Hume is in fact something that should be called a “psychological hedonist”, meaning that he is thought to believe our motivations and our actions to be determined by our prospect of pain and pleasure; that we are ultimately moved to action on the by our seek for pleasure or avoidance of pain (Árdal, 1966). However, an alternative interpretation to be presented in this paper suggests otherwise. When Hume is read in that way, it becomes a lot less clear that he see the role of cognition in his account of motivation as being as limited as the traditional interpretation suggests. Karlsson points out, for example, that the “Humean” account does not distinguish clearly enough between reason and motivation and that it overlooks the fact that Hume claims reason *alone* to be inert. In any case, Hume clearly does allow space for reason in his theory and one example is his idea that reason is capable of changing our desires, for example. The desires rest upon cognition in two ways. One of them is that in most cases we only form passions when we judge the existence of an object and when we judge that the object has pleasure in store for us. The other important role played by reason is that of determining means to our ends.

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It seems to me that the arguments supporting the alternative account to be presented are very persuasive, for the reasons listed above, and since there it is pointed out that a motivational account, if it is to be of interest, must be able to deal with the relationship between reason and motivation.

By endorsing the view that our judgments about the rightness of an action can serve as a motive for action at the same time, we are accepting an internalist account of motivation where the *reason* for action also becomes the *motive* for action. By reject the view, we must say at least that an agent's reasons for action will not, on their own accord, move the agent to act. That does not necessarily mean that reason has no role in motivation, only that recognizing that one has a *reason* to act in a given way does not provide the *motive* for action. On Hampton's analysis, it seems that we would have to concur with the *Millian* or the *Humean* accounts where there is a clear distinction between the *reasons* and the *motives* for action. That means that we would have to agree that one could recognize that they have a reason to act in a given way and even that the reason is a good one, but, at the same time, be completely unmoved by that reason *unless* it so happens that the reason is able to activate in them some psychological states that would dispose them to act. Now, as we have seen, there may be more than one way one could talk about externalism in this context. For one thing, the extent to which reason is believed to influence our actions varies, as does the force of the judgment. As we saw in the Millian account, it is quite possible that our rational judgments may have authority over us, and we may be criticized for not abiding to them, even though they are not able to *move* us. On the other hand, one might also believe that our actions fall out of the domain of reason, as the standard interpretation of Hume's moral philosophy invites. What I believe remains unclear is whether that reading of Hume is entirely accurate and whether or not he should be believed to be as skeptical with regard to the function of practical reason as a motivating force.

2.3 Rational ends

The third question concerning practical reason that we will examine has to do with what I call rational ends. This is a view that has to do with our alleged abilities to choose our goals rationally. This is an issue that has split moral philosophers, and this ability is something that Hume is famous for not believing in. When I talk about the ability to choose ends via reason I am referring to the question about

whether reason can ever be that which determines our ends (Karlsson, 2000, 16). While this will be treated here as an independent issue, it is worth noting that it is closely connected to the idea of rational motivation. As has already been shown, questions of motivation are often closely connected to questions of ends. While one interpretation of Hume allows the only role of reason to be that of determining means to ends that are selected by some other faculty, this account raises questions of the possibility that the ends themselves could be selected through the application of reason. Then the question arises, could that serve as a motivating factor by itself? It seems that we have to connect the question of rational ends to the question of rational motivations since it is at the same time, at least partly, a question of whether rational ends can serve to motivate us. In other words, can we be moved to action by the fact that the ends we have chosen are recommended to us by reason? This, however, is not precisely the question I want to deal with here. Rather, my question has to do with the selection of ends. So, I am not yet asking about motivation and whether the rationality of our ends can serve as a motive for action but rather whether it is possible that we select ends by means of reason. The issues are closely connected, but I believe it is important to try to disentangle them and figure out the difference there is in those questions, however slight it may be. On the one hand there is the question of whether we can be motivated by rational judgments alone, which is the question dealt with in chapter 2.2, and on the other it is a question of whether we can select our goals, or ends, through the medium of reason. One view, which is that of the merely instrumental account of reason, is that our ends are never selected by the application of reason, but by some other faculties, such as desires or inclinations.

As was mentioned above, limiting practical reason to a merely instrumental role is to say that its only function is to determine means to ends. While it is recognized on all accounts that reason has this role, the dispute is over whether or not practical reason can have a thicker function, i.e. determining ends or serving as a motivating factor in addition to its instrumental role.

Now, what exactly might it mean to ascribe to *teleological rationalism*: i.e. the view that reason, rather than inclination, can provide us with ends? Mikael M. Karlsson deals with rational ends in the context of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* in his paper "Rational Ends: Humean and Non-Humean Considerations" (Karlsson, 2000). There he distinguishes between two senses in which we could say that reason provides us with ends. One of them Karlsson associates with Thomas Reid, a critic

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of Hume's, who claims that as long as we can conceive the ends via the application of reason, we could say that reason provides us with our ends. However, that seems to entail that our ends could still be *set* by desires or sentiments. It appears as if this story does not go very much further than the instrumental account in determining the role for practical reason. In both cases it is something other than reason that selects the ends, and it is something other than reason that motivates the agent to act on the ends, once selected. In that sense, Reid's understanding, as described by Karlsson, is a very weak way of speaking of teleological rationalism (Karlsson, 2000, 35).

What I have in mind when I talk about rational ends, is rather the possibility for reason to *set*, on its own accord, the ends we then strive to pursue. In other words, I am looking for an account where our ends that we seek to obtain are determined by the application of reason, rather than desire or inclination. This understanding of rational ends creates space for an account of *motivation* as well.

If what makes something an end is that we are moved to pursue it, then it is evidently whatever moves us to pursue something that sets that thing as an end (Karlsson, 2000, 35).

If this is the case, that what sets the end and what moves us to strive for it are inevitably the same thing, it seems that we must reject the externalist account, at least the Millian account where the *reason* for action can never be a *motive* at the same time. When put like this, the questions of *rational ends* and *rational motivation* become very closely intertwined. However, they are still distinct questions, though the difference between them might seem slight.

2.3.1 Skepticism about rational ends

Denying reason the role of selecting the ends of individuals does not mean that reason plays no role at all in a moral theory, just that it does not play any role in helping us how to decide what to strive for or to help us determine what goals are desirable. It still leaves a role for reason but that role is perhaps first and foremost an instrumental one. Also, it still seems possible that reason could play a role in motivation but that will not be discussed further here. Rather, let us take a look at what a moral theory that does not allow for rational selection of ends would look like.

What is worth noting in the first place is that it seems to imply that moral judgments are not rational in at least one sense. It entails that whenever we choose an end to strive for, we do so not on a rational basis but because of some other factors that influence us. This must also apply to moral judgments. When we have chosen the ends, the only part reason plays is when it determines the means available to us for obtaining the end. In that sense, skepticism about rational ends seems to leave us with a role of practical reason that is limited to an instrumental function.

In chapter 2.2, it was mentioned that moral externalists are sometimes accused of basing morality upon principles that are not strong enough to be the basis of morality. Even though the focus of the discussion there was on motivation, it seems that a similar argument could be given against those who claim that our ends, or our goals, cannot be chosen by a rational process. In fact, this view entails that whenever we strive for a morally praiseworthy action it is because of our desire to do so but not because of our rational judgment that this is the right course of action. It may appear counter-intuitive to say that a morally praiseworthy action is that which is done out of something other than the agent's own desires, or that the morally right thing to do might counter the agent's desires, but it is undeniable that an agent's desires are not obviously a very solid grounding for morality, especially if we believe it to be universal in some way.

As was mentioned above, the questions of rational teleology and rational motivation are closely connected and if we accept that what makes something an end is also what motivates us to pursue it, it seems that rejecting the possibility of rational end-setting is also a rejection of rational motivation.

2.4 Korsgaard's account

Christine Korsgaard deals with skepticism about practical reason in her paper with that title from 1986. She opens her discussion by explaining how Kant's account of morals provides a basis for morality where nothing beyond practical reason is needed to motivate an agent to act. He bases ethics upon practical reason, saying that moral behavior is that which is in conformity with reason. This, Korsgaard believes, shoves off a certain form of skepticism, but she also notes that Kant's approach invites in turn a skepticism about practical reason, by which Korsgaard means "doubts about the extent to which human action is or could possibly be directed by reason" (Korsgaard, 1986). In her paper she describes two different

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accounts of skepticism about practical reason. One of them is “the common doubt about whether the contradiction tests associated with the first formulation of the categorical imperative succeed in ruling out anything”⁶ (Korsgaard, 1986, 5). This kind of skepticism Korsgaard labels *content skepticism*.

The first formulation of Kant’s categorical imperative states that one should “[a]ct as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature” [Ak 4:421] meaning that those skeptical about it doubt that Kant’s principle is sufficient for us to rule out any action, i.e. it would not be sufficient for an agent to ask herself whether she can, without contradicting herself, want a given action to become a common rule. One could say that this was a skepticism about the capacity of reason by itself to guide or set limits our actions. The second type of skepticism Korsgaard discusses in her paper is what she labels *motivational skepticism* which is “doubt about the scope of reason as a motive” (Korsgaard, 1986, 5). It is this kind of skepticism that Korsgaard deals with in her paper and describes her project in the paper “I will argue [...] that motivational skepticism must always be based on content skepticism” (Korsgaard, 1986, 5-6). She claims that her aim is to show that “motivational skepticism has no independent force” (Korsgaard, 1986, 6). According to Korsgaard, Hume’s work presents a classical formulation of skepticism about practical reason where he says that “reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (T 415). Here, she believes, Hume states his view that reason serves only as to find the means to our ends where the ends are chosen by our passions. “Reason can teach us how to satisfy our desires or passions, but it cannot tell us whether those desires or passions are themselves ‘rational’” (Korsgaard, 1986, 6). What seems to be most significant in Korsgaard’s analysis for our purposes is that she believes Hume to be saying that we choose our ends by means of our passions, and the only function of

⁶This view is expressed by J.S Mill in the first Chapter of Utilitarianism where he claims that: I might go much further, and say that to all those a priori moralists who deem it necessary to argue at all, utilitarian arguments are indispensable. It is not my present purpose to criticise these thinkers; but I cannot help referring, for illustration, to a systematic treatise by one of the most illustrious of them, the *Metaphysics of Ethics*, by Kant. This remarkable man, whose system of thought will long remain one of the landmarks in the history of philosophical speculation, does, in the treatise in question, lay down a universal first principle as the origin and ground of moral obligation; it is this: "So act, that the rule on which thou actest would admit of being adopted as a law by all rational beings." But when he begins to deduce from this precept any of the actual duties of morality, he fails, almost grotesquely, to show that there would be any contradiction, any logical (not to say physical) impossibility, in the adoption by all rational beings of the most outrageously immoral rules of conduct. All he shows is that the consequences of their universal adoption would be such as no one would choose to incur.

rationality here is to determine how we may obtain the ends that we have chosen. This implies that Hume's account of practical reason is primarily instrumental and that this role "not only [prevents] reason from determining ends; it even prevents reason from ranking them, except with respect to their conduciveness to some other end" (Korsgaard, 1986, 6).

But is this really Hume's own account? It is my hope that by analyzing some of Hume's texts, different accounts of practical reason might become clearer to us and perhaps we might encounter some others that deserve attention, beyond the instrumental account.

3 Practical reason in Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*

While Hume discusses many important things in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, there are several sections that are more important for our purposes than others. Here I am concerned specifically with what Hume has to say about the interconnection between *reason*, *motives* and *action*. For that reason, I have selected several sections from the *Treatise* that all deal with issues related to this topic, and a discussion of them should, therefore, provide us with the material needed to establish an understanding of what it is that Hume has to say in this regard.

The first part of Hume's text to be explored is the first section of part one in book two of the *Treatise*. In this section, Hume discusses how we should categorize what he calls the "perceptions of the mind". Hume starts out by making a distinction between *impressions* and *ideas*, and then he distinguishes between *original* and *secondary* impressions. When an impression is original, it arises directly in the soul independently from any prior perceptions. This includes all impressions and all pains and pleasures of the body. The secondary impressions, on the other hand may be derived from some of the original ones but are often accompanied by an *idea*. This includes the passions and all emotions that resemble them. Now, when Hume speaks of *ideas* he has in mind 'copies' of impressions. That means that an idea is a re-appearance of something that has already appeared in the mind of the agent or is composed of such "copies" (T 275).

Hume maintains that impressions precede their ideas, meaning that there must be some impressions which make their appearance in the mind directly. This is not the central focus of Hume's investigation; he is most concerned with the secondary impressions which arise either from the impressions or their corresponding ideas.

Bodily pains and pleasures are the source of many passions, both when felt and considered by the mind; but arise originally in the soul, or in the

body, whichever you please to call it without any preceding thought or perception. A fit of the gout produces a long train of passions, as grief, hope, fear; but is not derived immediately from any affection or idea (T 276).

The passions can arise directly from pain or pleasure, and when they do, they arise without any consideration by the agent. They are direct responses to pain or pleasure. However, Hume recognizes that there is another category of passions; the *reflective* passions that arise in us from the original passions, but are accompanied by an idea.

The reflective passions can then be divided into calm or violent passions where the calm passions include the “sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition, and external objects” (T 276). The violent, reflective passions include “love and hatred, grief and joy, pride and humility” (T 276). The distinction between calm and violent passions is not very exact, but the violent passions are more forceful than what we feel when we sense, say, the beauty of an object. There is a further distinction that is made between direct and indirect passions where the direct passions are those that “arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure” (T 276) while the indirect are produced by “the same principles, but by the conjunction of other qualities” (T 276). At this point, Hume does not clarify what he means by “other qualities”, but in any case it seems that the impressions *alone* may not be capable of producing an indirect passion on their own accord.

What Hume seems to be doing here is to distinguish between passions that arise directly in the soul without any assistance from other sources and others that will not arise without further assistance, for example from reason, or from what Hume labels *ideas*. Judging from the passages, quoted above, it seems that one would have to accept that when passions are direct they arise out of our sense of pain and pleasure. When Hume says that direct passions “arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure” it is not quite clear how he views the relationship between *pleasure* and *good*, and *pain* and *evil*. If we compare various passages, it appears that he equates these terms, making what is painful *evil* and that which is pleasurable *good*. There is a difference between using the terms interchangeably on the one hand and saying that the goodness or badness of an action is determined by the pain or pleasure which it brings upon us, or vice versa¹. For now, we will

¹Further discussion of this point would be interesting and useful, but here it will be let to suffice to point out this issue.

assume that what Hume means is that those are synonymous and that direct passions arise from our sense of pain or pleasure by themselves without regard to any other reference to any independent good or evil of the objects in question.

The indirect passions, however, do not necessarily arise without some further reference to our ideas, or to reason. Hume discusses the relationship between impressions and ideas a little later on. Hume's example is of the passions of *pride* and *humility*. His claim is that those passions, as indirect passions, are produced in virtue of something other than a mere impression. For Hume, the *object* of those passions is the self and he claims that if we remove the idea of the self, the passions of pride and humility immediately disappear (T 277). However, the idea of the self cannot be sufficient in order to excite the passions on its own accord. Hume then attempts to separate the cause of the production of the passion, and the object to which they are pointed once they have been excited.

The first idea, that is presented to the mind, is that of the cause or productive principle. This excites the passion, connected with it; and that passion, when excited, turns our view to another idea, which is that of self. Here then is a passion plac'd betwixt two ideas, of which the one produces it, and the other is produc'd by it. The first idea, therefore, represents the *cause*, the second the *object* of the passion (T 278).

Here, the "other qualities" in question are two ideas that must necessarily support the impressions in order to excite a passion. Hume makes an example of a man who is proud of his house that he has built himself. For Hume, the *cause* of the man's pride is the house, while he himself is the *object* of the passion. Without a reference to the man's idea of himself, the beauty of the house could never produce in him the passion of pride. Therefore, one might say that the idea of the relation between the man and his house serves to excite a passion (T 279).

It seems that in the case of *indirect passions*, Hume's account suggests that in order to excite a passion, our ability to judge the relationship between objects is essential. This can be seen in the example described above where the man's pride rests on his impression as well as on his judgment of his own relationship with the house.²

Further on, in the eighth section of the third part of book two, Hume summarizes his own discussion of passions. Here, he speaks of *violent* and *calm* passions.

²This will not be discussed further here, but the interconnection between ideas and impressions should be kept in mind.

3 Practical reason in Hume's Treatise of Human Nature

The latter he believes to be commonly mistaken for creatures of *reason*, rather than of *sentiment*. There he describes the violent passions as follows:

[...] *passion* is a violent and sensible emotion of mind, when any good or evil is presented, or any object, which, by the original formation of our faculties, is fitted to excite an appetite (T 437).

Here, good and evil are described as that which excites a desire whenever an agent has either good or evil in prospect. The calm passions, which Hume refers to here as *reason* - because they are mistakenly thought to derive from reason, which, in his actual view they are not - he describes in the following way:

By reason we mean affections of the very same kind with the former; but such as operate more calmly, and cause no disorder in the temper: Which tranquillity leads us into a mistake concerning them, and causes us to regard them as conclusions only of our intellectual faculties (T 437).

The main difference between the calm and violent passions seems to be the power of their influence upon our will. Even though the violent passions present themselves in our will in a more powerful way, Hume also admits that the calm passions are capable of controlling our violent passions, especially when the violent passions are accompanied by a reflection. What is noteworthy here is that Hume seems to discuss the much debated topic of the battle between reason and passion in different terms. Here it is not a battle between reason and passion but a battle between *calm* and *violent* passions. In addition, let it be noted that Hume claims the calm passions, "when corroborated by reflection, and seconded by resolution" (T 437) to be able to weigh against, and even outweigh, the violent passions and thus influence our actions. This possibility should not come as a surprise, granted that the calm passions are passions, but it is worthy of attention that Hume suggests that their strength becomes greater when they are accompanied by reasoning of some sort.

The last part of book 2 of Hume's *Treatise* that will be inspected is the ninth section of the third part. The title of that section is "Of the Direct passions". Hume's opening statement in this section is that:

'Tis easy to observe, that the passions, both direct and indirect, are founded on pain and pleasure, and that in order to produce an affection

of any kind, 'tis only requisite to present some good or evil.³ Upon the removal of pain and pleasure there immediately follows a removal of love and hatred, pride and humility, desire and aversion, and of most of our reflective or secondary impressions (T 438).

Hume believes our passions to be based upon the prospect of pain and pleasure, meaning that when that prospect is removed, the passions will subsequently disappear. This applies to the indirect passions as well since, although they may often be accompanied by something other than an impression, they do require that impression in order to excite a passion. So far, Hume's view of the difference between direct and indirect passions has been discussed, as well as the different ways in which they are able to influence our will. Hume describes the relationship between our desires and the will in the following manner:

When good is certain or probable, it produces joy. When evil is in the same situation there arises grief or sorrow. When either good or evil is uncertain, it gives rise to fear or hope, according to the degrees of uncertainty on the one side of the other. Desire arises from good considered simply, and aversion is derived from evil. The will exerts itself, when either the good or the absence of the evil may be attained by any action of the mind or body (T 439).

The prospect of good is what creates joy, while the sense of evil in store creates grief or sorrow. We fear or hope when we are not certain of good or evil; we may hope for the good but still fear the evil, for example. What we believe to be good we desire, while we are averse to what we judge to be evil. When we may obtain a good or avoid an evil through a given action we act on our will. Therefore, it seems that the will functions to judge between possible ways available to us to obtain a goal, according to Hume. That would mean that we do not use the will to choose between objects or to determine their value but that we use the will in order to select a strategy or a course of action that we have judged worthy by our sense of pleasure or pain.

The third book of the *Treatise* is called *Of Morals*, and in the first section of part one Hume discusses "Moral Distinctions Not Derived from Reason". Here,

³In this passage, it is pretty clear that Hume is using *good* and *evil* as synonyms for *pleasure* and *pain* (or perhaps more properly for the pleasant and the painful); and this is continued in other passages to be quoted in this chapter.

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Hume raises the question of morals, or how it is that we judge between right and wrong.

Whether 'tis by means of our *ideas* or *impressions* we distinguish betwixt vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blameable or praiseworthy? (T 456).

Here, Hume poses a central question regarding the relationship between morality, reason and passions that has long been subject to philosophical discussion. Hume pursues this question by claiming that in order to determine whether virtue is simply based on conformity to reason, we must ask whether it is possible to distinguish between good and evil through the mere usage of reason, or whether there are some other principles needed in addition. Hume's conclusion is clear:

Since morals . . . have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows, that they cannot be deriv'd from reason; and that because reason alone, as we have already prov'd, can never have any such influence. Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality therefore, are not conclusions of our reason (T 457).

Hume's argument is that as long as we accept that unaided reason cannot move us to act we must accept that reason by itself is not enough to discover the principles of morality. Hume claims to have already proven reason to be inert and incapable of moving an agent toward action. What he has argued, and reiterates here, is that:

Reason is the discovery of truth or falsehood. Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the *real* relations of ideas, or to *real* existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, it is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason. Now 'tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement. [...] 'Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason⁴ (T 458).

⁴It should be kept in mind that this has already been discussed in the second chapter of this thesis.

From this passage we can see that Hume does not believe our actions, or passions to be susceptible to any judgment of reason. They are incapable of being subject to rational judgment since reason is concerned with the discovery of truth and falsehood while passions are incapable of being either true or false. The implication is that morality is not a creation of unaided reason, which is the view of the moral rationalists that Hume opposes, as was described in the beginning of the third chapter.

Since passions are original and complete in themselves they cannot be declared to be true or false or to be susceptible to the judgments of reason. For Hume, we may approve or disapprove of a given action but they can never be judged to be reasonable or unreasonable. “Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals” (T 458). Hume expresses his position in a quite explicit manner, reason *alone* is unable to give rise to any action and one might even say that judging action based on its relation to reason would be a category mistake.

So far, several things have been established about the nature of passions and their role in morals. First of all, it needs to be kept in mind that certain kinds of passions arise as an immediate response to our judgment of pain or pleasure in prospect. The other kind of passions, the indirect passions, also stem from those sources but they may be accompanied by *ideas*. Therefore, the indirect passions rest on an interrelation between impressions and ideas, where one of those components is not sufficient in exciting a passion. *Reason* for Hume, is concerned with judging matters of fact and can never, by itself, serve to influence our actions since actions are motivated by our passions.

As discussed earlier in this thesis. Hume names two different ways in which reason can have influence on human action. On the one hand, it can let us know about the existence of an object that excites a passion, and on the other it can determine the relationship between cause and effect and inform us of the proper course of action if we are to obtain a given end. These determinations of reason can be false, we may be mistaken about the existence of an object we desire or we may choose means that do not help us obtain a given end (T 459). This does affect our actions or even passions, but for Hume it would be erroneous to say that they render those actions unreasonable. Furthermore, Hume does not believe those mistakes to be the source of the greater part of immorality. On the contrary, he claims them to be rather innocent. Those are mistakes about facts and do not constitute or reveal

any moral flaws in a person (T 459). From these, and other, passages in the *Treatise* it is evident that Hume confirms his view that while reason can in fact play a role in the determination of our actions, that does not render the actions themselves rational. Actions lie beyond the domain of the rational or irrational.

This discussion, however, seems to beg the question of the possibility of reasonable passions. In other words, it may be the case that our actions are not rational, and a failure in reason regarding means to our ends does not render the action irrational; but what about the possibility of our passions being irrational? Hume opens this discussion when he deals with the question of the possibility of a mistake in right rather than a mistake of fact. Hume's answer is direct, it is impossible that a mistake about what is right might ever be the source of immorality because "[...] it supposes a real right and wrong; that is, a real distinction in morals, independent of these judgments" (T 460). Here, the judgments Hume refers to are false judgments of pain or pleasure that a given object might have in store for an agent. Furthermore, Hume says:

[...] it is impossible, that the distinction betwixt moral good and evil, can be made by reason; since that distinction has an influence upon our actions, of which reason alone is incapable. Reason and judgment may, indeed, be the mediate cause of an action, by prompting, or by directing a passion: but it is not pretended, that a judgment of this kind, either in its truth or falsehood, is attended with virtue or vice (T 462).

It appears that the only ways in which reason might influence our actions is either by informing us that a given object, or a given action, may bring us pain or pleasure or by informing us about the appropriate actions we could take in order to obtain a given good. Those are judgments of matters of fact, and though they may be related to morals, they are not *moral judgments* per se.

However, let it be noted that it is possible that reason does here play a greater role than it has often been thought to do. For one thing, it seems that our ideas may be believed to be rational judgments. This applies, for instance, to the case of the man who is proud of his house. The recognition of the relationship between the house and the man's *self* seems to be a rational judgment, meaning that the passion of pride is, at least partly, assisted by a rational judgment.⁵ On the other hand, it seems that our recognizing the prospect of pleasure, or pain, may also

⁵Here it should be kept in mind that Hume allows for ideas to *cause* our forming a passion.

be considered a rational judgment. If reason is concerned with matters of fact, and whether or not an object has pleasure in store for us is a question of fact, it seems that we would have to allow that reason plays a role in generating direct passions as well.

Hume does recognize two ways in which reason can influence our actions and even though reason cannot *motivate* an agent directly, it is allowed that rational judgment may *cause* an agent to form a passion. It is also allowed that reason (in Hume's sense) can and does tell us when we have pleasure or pain in prospect. Even though that judgment is not, in itself, sufficient to motivate us to act, it seems that our appetite for pleasure is also incapable of moving us to act on its own accord, since in addition to the appetite, a rational judgment is needed in order to excite a passion. Therefore, I believe that there is quite a bit more to say about Hume's view on the role of practical reason than is traditionally maintained.

4 Interpretations of Hume's *Treatise*

In the chapter above we saw examples of some of the things Hume has to say about practical reason in his *Treatise of Human Nature*. The chapter does not give a complete account of Hume's writings on the topic but it should still suffice to demonstrate an account of some of the most important points for our purposes. While Hume's writings may seem straightforward, a careful reading will uncover significant ambiguities in the text. Perhaps for this reason, amongst others, competing interpretations of Hume's texts have been presented over the years. What I call the 'traditional interpretation' is, as the name suggests, the reading that has become standard. That account is of great importance, not the least because of its prevalence. The traditional interpretation of Hume's theory of moral motivation can be traced all the way back to his contemporaries, and has been associated with Immanuel Kant who's work *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* is often read as a contrast to Hume's work¹. However, it is not the only way in which Hume's work may be read and here I will also establish an alternative reading of Hume. The account I chose has, according to Mikael M. Karlsson, been presented by several authors, such as Kydd (1946), Árdal (1966), Norton (1982), Baier (1991) and Radcliffe (1999). The specific ideas of those authors will not be discussed here. They are mentioned in order to show that Karlsson is not the only author who maintains this reading but their works will not be discussed any further. Keeping the specific quotations from Hume's own work in mind, we will hopefully be able

¹Even though Kant's work is often read in this way, it remains unclear how much of Hume's work Kant actually read. Another scholar whom this reading may be accredited to is Thomas Reid. However, Kant's account is typically contrasted with that of Hume's and Kant is often read as a textbook example of how Hume's view might be contrasted. Additionally, I believe there are certain similarities between the two authors that are often neglected, especially when it comes to the issues that are being dealt with in this thesis. A careful reading of Kant, and Hume, on those issues will hopefully reveal points they make about *reasons*, *passions* and *action*, that are often ignored.

to establish an understanding of where and why those two readings differ and that may bring us closer to answering any questions about the extent to which Hume may be considered a skeptic about practical reason.

4.1 The traditional interpretation

On the traditional interpretation of Hume, his theory is often referred to as “anti-rationalist”, meaning that in Hume’s account morality cannot rest upon pure rational judgment. Thereby, Hume’s work is often contrasted with that of Immanuel Kant’s. However, it is very unclear how accurate a reading that is, both because of what was mentioned in a footnote to the above chapter 4 about doubts that have been raised about Kant actually reading very much of Hume’s work but such doubts raise questions of how exact it is to contrast the two authors. Hume obviously did not respond to Kant directly, but he did respond to the cognitivists of his time who upheld views very akin to the views of Immanuel Kant.

Hume’s project is in part that of arguing against the classical view that reason should prevail over the passions and define the ends to which we strive. According to many Hume scholars, such as Páll S. Árdal (1982), Hume’s most direct objective in writing about reason and motivation - particularly, but not exclusively in the realm of morals - aims to contradict certain moral rationalists who were his rough contemporaries. Árdal claims that Hume directed his critique not only at the tradition in philosophy, primarily at William Wollaston and Samuel Clarke, who emphasized the necessity of the prevalence of reason over passions in the sphere of morality, but that Hume also opposed this rationalist view amongst the general public (Árdal, 1982, 33-34).

There is not room here to characterize, in any detail, the views of the rationalist thinkers who are Hume’s targets. However, as may be seen especially in Book 3, Part 1, Section 1 of the *Treatise*, Hume is emphatically concerned to deny that reason, which he defines as “the discovery of truth and falsehood” (perhaps he should have said the faculty that discovers truth and falsehood) “is the faculty by means of which we can make moral judgments: “Moral distinctions [...] are not the offspring of reason”. (T 458). His argument rests on the fact that “’Tis impossible [that our passions, volitions and actions] can be pronounced true or false, and either contrary or conformable to reason,” since they are “not susceptible of agreement or disagreement” (T 458) with anything: they make no claims about matters of fact.

Moreover, moral judgments have an "influence on human passions and actions"; they are "active" or motivating. But the deliverances of reason, which are judgments of fact, are in themselves, "inactive", or "inert"; "reason alone [...] can never have any such influence" as morals, which "excite passions, and produce or prevent actions". (T 457) "As long as it is allow'd that reason has no influence on our passions and actions," Hume says, "'tis vain to pretend that morality is discover'd only by a deduction of reason." (T457)

In these passages we can see more or less exactly what, in the so-called rationalist view, Hume is specifically concerned to deny. First, he denies that moral judgments are deliverances of reason; secondly, and relatedly (in the manner evident in these passages), he denies that anything deriving from reason alone (no factual judgment, for example) has the power to move us. Unaided reason is thus, as Hume words it, "inert". These are the two claims of the rationalists that Hume specifically rejects. For this reason, he would likewise have rejected the later views of Immanuel Kant (largely generated in reaction to Hume), where Kant argues that we can determine what is our moral duty (and, even more widely) what we ought, or ought not, to do by the application of reason alone; and in the moral case, without even any reference to sentiment, and can moreover be moved to act accordingly by having arrived at these rational conclusions as such.

The question to be raised is whether these two main Humean commitments (which are recognized as such by almost all commentators and interpreters) imply some sort of skepticism about practical reason, and if so, what sort of skepticism and what sort of practical reason.

It seems to be that with regard to what has already been discussed in this thesis, in both chapter two and chapter three, there might be something more to say about both authors than is traditionally maintained. I believe there is perhaps more to say about Hume's account than that he rejects any role for practical reason, other than an instrumental one and I also believe that perhaps Kant has more to say about motivation than only that we may be moved to act only by a rational judgment. Here, I hope to establish both an understanding of the standard interpretation of Hume's account, and to challenge the standard interpretations of both Hume and Kant.

In order to obtain a clearer understanding of the differences between Kant and Hume, and of course the standard interpretation of Hume's work, we will take a look at several passages from Kant's work. Let it be noted that the all descriptions

of Hume's views in this chapter are what I believe to be his views as described by the conventional understanding of his theory. The merit or demerit of that reading will not be dealt with here. It is my hope that by presenting an overview of Kant's moral philosophy, we may better understand which aspects there are that are considered to mark the most important contrasts between Hume and Kant and that it will also pave the way for a discussion of a less conventional interpretation of Hume that will be the focus of our later discussion.

On the traditional interpretation of Hume, he is believed to maintain that reason can only serve an instrumental role. Hume is believed to uphold a view where reason, being *inert*, can only serve to present us with appropriate means to our ends. On this reading, reason cannot serve to motivate an agent to act, nor can it take part in the selection of our ends. Of the three accounts of practical reason that have been presented, it is allowed only an instrumental role on the standard interpretation of Hume. It seems to me that authors who maintain this tend to neglect what Hume has to say about reason *alone* being incapable of any such role. While it is true that Hume is not a cognitivist of the kind he opposed to, he does allow a role to reason².

This is the view often contrasted with Kant's who is believed to be a cognitivist of the kind Hume opposed to. That view entails that Kant is believed to have reason account for all moral motivation. On this view, Kant claims that we are capable of selecting our ends, through the application of our rational faculties. He also believes that our recognizing that a given action is in accordance with the moral law, uncovered by us by the medium of reason, will move us to action in order to obtain the end we have selected. In addition to all this, Kant also acknowledges an instrumental role for reason, where our judgment about the appropriate means to obtain an end impose on us a *rational necessity* which thereby poses force upon us. Kant, therefore, allows reason alone a very great and significant role in causing us to act and is thereby seen as a complete opposite of Hume's. Even though they are both believed to subscribe to an instrumental role of reason, they view this role in very different ways under the traditional interpretation. As we have seen, means-ends reasoning poses on us a necessity while for Hume, there is nothing irrational about failing to act on the means that have been selected.

My claim is that this opposition is not as direct, or obvious, as is commonly

²This is to be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.2 where I discuss an alternative reading of Hume's account.

maintained. The reasons are to be found both in Kant's and in Hume's work. The key to an unconventional interpretation of Kant may be found in his footnote to Ak 401, which has already been discussed in chapter two. There, Kant acknowledges that it is quite possible to classify *respect* as a feeling. He does not believe it to be an ordinary feeling that is derived from our sentiments, but rather a feeling that has its source in our rational faculties. Respect for the moral law is what gets us to act out of *duty* and if that duty is not a purely rational concept, it remains a little unclear that one would want to say that Kant classifies our motives as derived from reason alone.

The alternative interpretation of Hume that is to be presented in greater detail in the following chapter suggests that while it is correct that for Hume reason cannot move an agent to act on its own accord, the story does not end there. It is maintained that even though this might be the case, that does not mean that reason has no role to play in the formation of motives. On the contrary, reason is believed to play a significant role where the sentiment alone is not enough to form a passion in the agent.

When put in this way, we might have a different picture of both Hume and Kant that is worthy of our attention. For one thing, both authors seem to uphold similar views. In both cases it seems that a combination of *reason* and *sentiment* is needed in order to motivate an agent to act. They do not seem to advocate the exact same views, but there are certain similarities that seem to undermine the claim that the authors are as directly opposed to one another as is traditionally maintained.

4.2 An alternative interpretation of Hume

While Kant's interpretation of Hume's work is entirely standard, it is not the only way in which Hume's *Treatise* has been read. Here, I draw on the formulation of Mikael M. Karlsson, who doubts that Kant's interpretation, and thereby the majority of all discussion about Hume's work, is an accurate depiction of what Hume himself has to say on the subjects discussed in this thesis. I will use three papers by Karlsson in order to establish an understanding. That does not mean, however, that Karlsson is the only author to describe this view, he himself lists Kydd (1946), Árdal (1966), Norton (1982), Baier (1991) and Radcliffe (1999) as having related views. Still, this discussion will be limited to an exploration of Mikael Karlsson's account, as it provides ample material to against which we can examine the standard

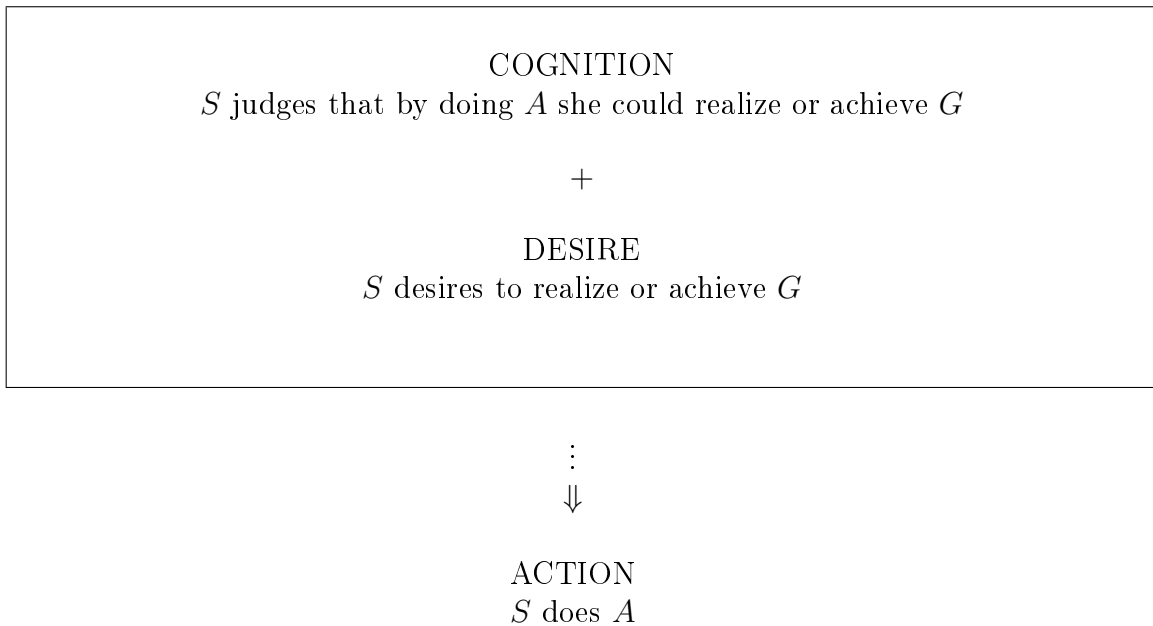
interpretation of Hume's theory of moral motivation.

Karlsson begins by briefly describing the standard interpretation of Hume, the one that we have already discussed in the above chapters. What is most important for our current purposes is the interpretation that human beings have certain desires or inclinations. They can also judge states of affairs by the usage of reason. They turn those matters of fact into objects after which the agents seek. An agent can also use her reason to discover the appropriate means to the ends she desires. The joint judgment and desires create a motive for the agent for action, meaning that they move the agent to action. As should be clear, according to Hume, reason is concerned with "the discovery of truth and falsehood" and the relationship between objects and is essential in our determining the appropriate means to our ends. Still, it is incapable of producing any action on its own. These and other things that were discussed in the above passage on the traditional interpretation of Hume have become the standard reading of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. Yet, several philosophers have doubted that this account truly is Hume's own. Karlsson refers to this reading of Hume as the "'Humean' account of motivation" with Humean in scare quotes since he doubts that this reading is truly Hume's. Here, I will adopt Karlsson's language referring to the standard interpretation as the 'Humean' account.

While Karlsson doubts that the view usually attributed to Hume is entirely correct that is not to say that he rejects all elements of that reading. Rather, it is admitted that reason and passion are distinct from one another and that judgment alone cannot be the moving force of any action. Furthermore, it is allowed that Hume does not believe morality to be founded upon reason since morality excites us to act and reason alone cannot have any such force (Karlsson, 2006, 238). Karlsson claims that the "Humean" account of motivation seems to have two components, G , which is a desire for a given object or a condition and the believe that by doing A , the agent S may achieve the good G . This is shown in figure 4.1, below.

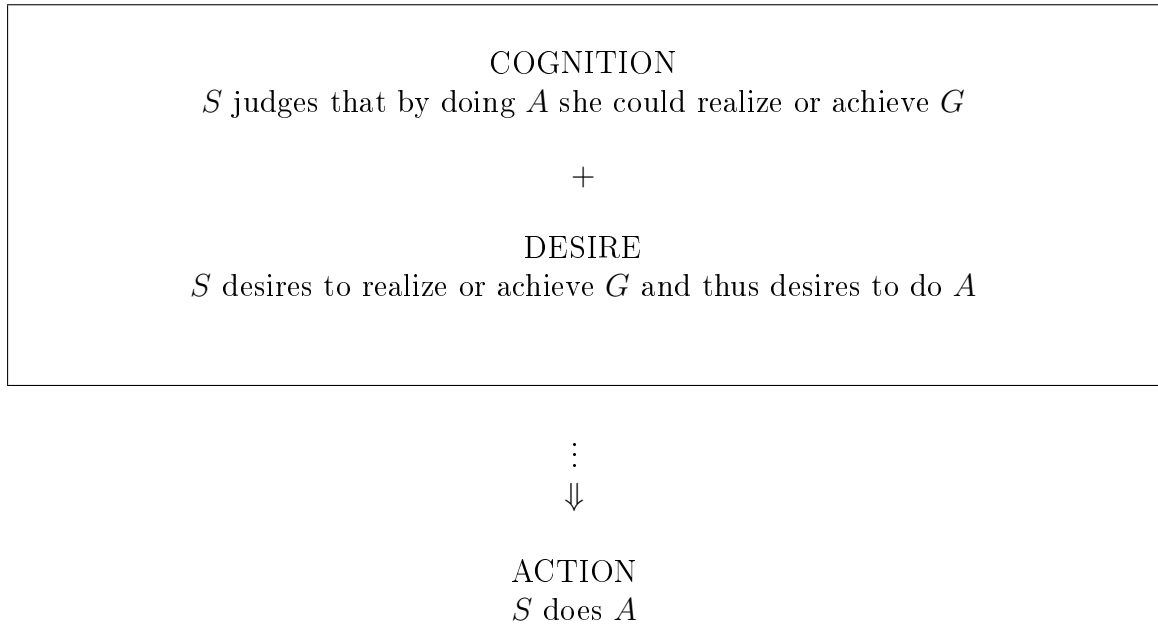
In the figure the items inside the box represent the desire and the judgment and they, combined, constitute the motivation for the agent S to act. The downward arrow outside the box represents the causal connection between the boxed items, the constituents of the motivation, and the action. Let it be observed that this does not mean that S necessarily does A but rather, that the boxed items cause the agent to be inclined to do A , and so she is moved to do so. However, other considerations may be taken into account. The agent may have conflicting motives, or judge that the time for action is not convenient or she may not believe it possible for her to do

Figure 4.1: First formulation of the “Humean” model



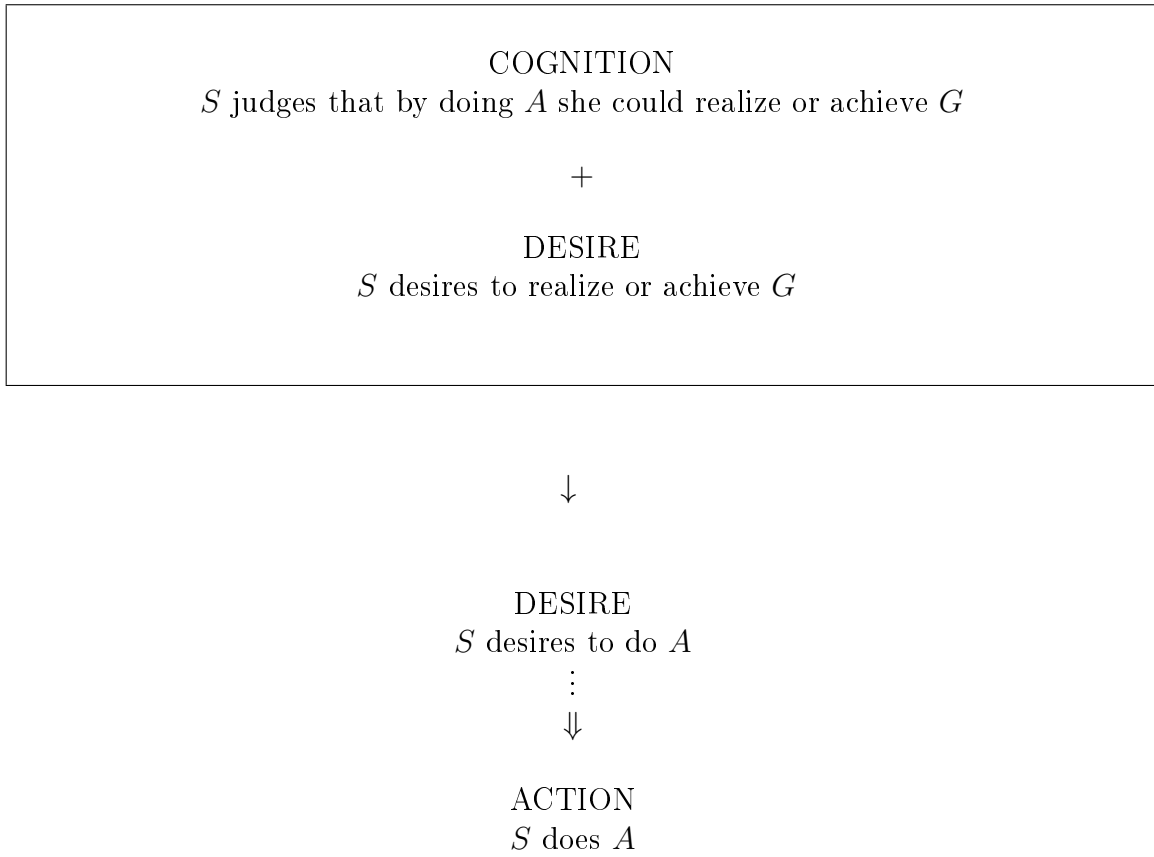
A. Still, she is moved towards it because of the elements from inside the box that have inclined the agent towards the action. That makes the combined boxed items the agent motive for action. Surely, the concept of motivation could be debated in depth but here it will suffice to accept a definition of Karlsson’s “a motive [...] is a subjective state which disposes an agent to a certain sort of action” (Karlsson, 2006, 238). On Karlsson’s account, anyone dedicated to the ‘Humean’ account of motivation will want to allow that *S*’s doing *A* will be causally connected to her desire to do *A*, but that desire is nowhere to be found within the model. One way to accommodate that desire would be to include it in the box.

Figure 4.2: First alternative to the "Humean" model



Here, the agent's action is further explained by pointing out that her desire to do *G* will give rise to her desire to do *A* which she has judged to be the appropriate course of action. It is a reinstatement of the agent's desire to do *G* where *A* is the means to *G*. That means that the agent's desire to do *A* can be explained in the 'Humean' terms, making it the result of a combined passion and judgment. The second way in which the desire to *A* can be accounted for is explained in the figure below.

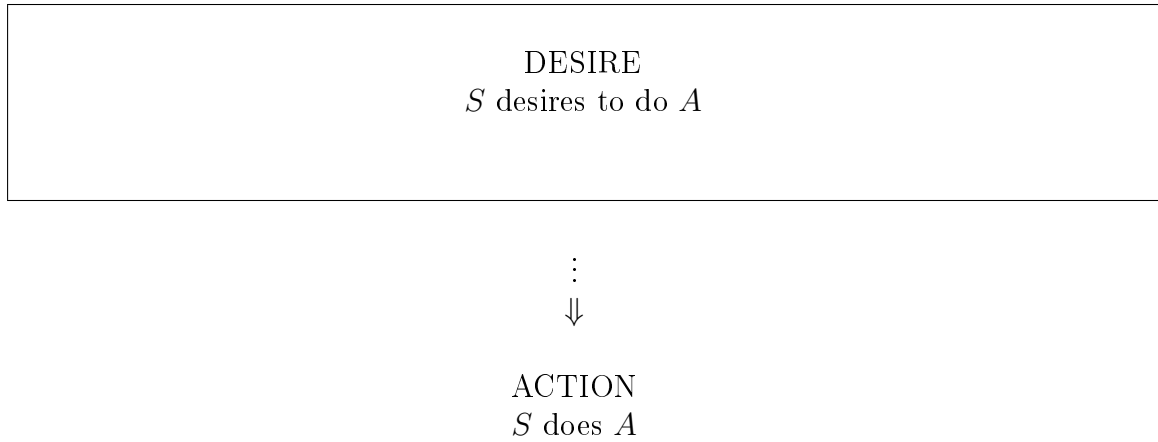
Figure 4.3: Second alternative to the “Humean” model



While this formulation is in many ways very similar to the first alternative it differs in that *S*'s desire to do *A* is removed from the box and that is taken to signify that the desire to do *A* is distinct from the desire to do *G* while it is at the same time derived from the boxed items in some important way. It is left unspecified whether that relationship is logical, causal or otherwise. It is, therefore, a distinct desire while it is, at the same time, dependent upon the desire to do *G*. We will now focus on the second alternative as presented in figure 4.3 where the desire to do *A* has been removed from the box and is seen as an independent component of the motivational process. This depiction raises some questions. Firstly, do the boxed items still count as the agent's motive to do *A*, even though there is a separate motive situated outside of that process and that motive seems to be related to the ultimate action of the agent to a much greater extent? Secondly, since the agent's desire to do *A* is very closely related to her action, much more closely than in the first alternative, why then is that desire to do *A* not a sufficient motive on its own? In other words, why is the model presented in figure 4.4 not sufficient to account for

a sentimentalist view of moral motivation?

Figure 4.4: Minimalist model



This becomes a pressing question when we consider the sentimentalist view that no reasons can be given for or against our desires. Hume is associated with this view since he claims that passion can never be “[...] either contrary or conformable to reason” (T 458), which does seem to imply that desires are independent of reason. Passions can be called ‘unreasonable’ on two accounts, one is if the desire is based upon the existence of objects that are in fact nonexistent and the other is when an agent chooses means that are insufficient in providing her with the desired ends. Hume still maintains that even when this is the case, we are not properly speaking about a failure of the desire but rather a failure of rational judgment (T 416). For Karlsson, Hume’s account does not describe the desire the agent *S* has to do *A* such as that it does not need to be accounted for since it derives from the agent’s desire to achieve *G*.

The agent’s desire to do *A* is constituted by the agent’s desire to achieve the ultimate goal and the judgment that the *A* is the appropriate means to that end. In figure 4.3 it is shown how the combination of those two items constitute the reason the agent *S* has for desiring *A*. Even if the desire to achieve *G* may be unaccounted for in the terms of reason that is not the case with *S*’s desire to do *A*. This means that we can explain the agent’s desire to do *A* by referring to it as the means to achieve the ultimate goal of *G* (Karlsson, 2006, 241).

Why is it important that such an account is given in this case? If the agent is motivated to action by the desire to do *A*, why does it matter that we can connect that motive to a reason for action? The answer lies in the traditional

of moral philosophy of this kind, where it is allowed that a theory of motivation that is to be of use and interest to the readers must be capable of connecting the agent's motives with her actions. A motivational theory needs to be able to show how motives, reasons and actions are connected, while it is commonly believed that a reason for action is not a proper one if it fails to be connected with the agent's motive as well. Likewise, it may be maintained that a motive for action must be connected to the agent's reason. This view is associated with, for example, St. Thomas Aquinas who maintained there is a certain difference between a human action and the act of a man, which may be described with regard to the agent's reason for action. It is not uncommon to claim that human action is voluntary action done for a reason and that this kind of action is in a fundamental way different from an act which may be, for example involuntary. For Karlsson, the ultimate goal of a theory of motivation is to establish an account of or how an agent can be moved to act for a reason, making this relationship the main focus of any motivational theory. Karlsson also believes that this view was shared by Hume, meaning that an interpretation of Hume's theory should be read with this in mind.

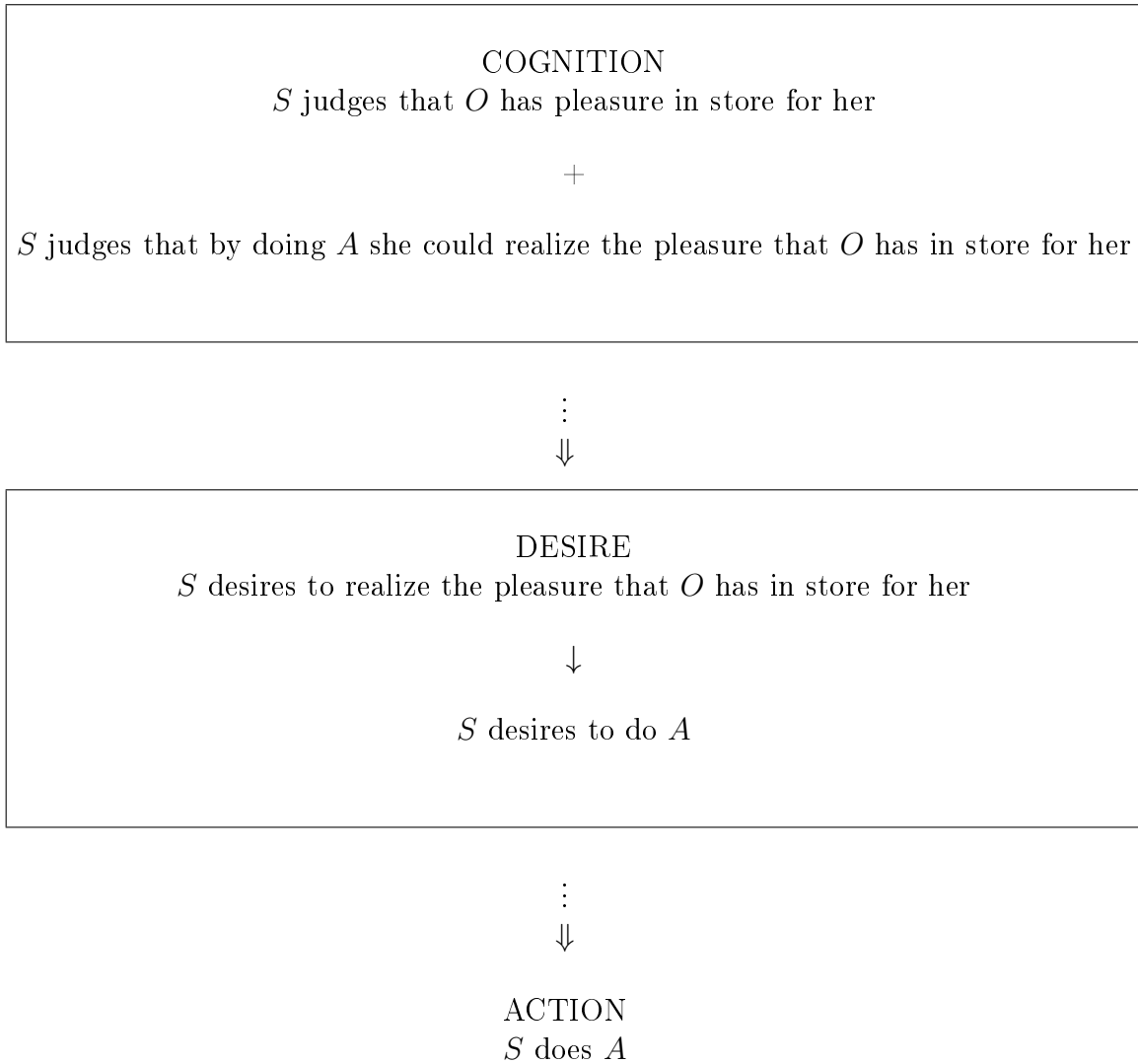
Keeping all this in mind, it seems that is insufficient to say that an agent's motive to do *A* is that she was disposed to do it. This does not serve to explain the motive since it fails in connecting the named motive to the agent's reason for action. A reason in this sense should be able to shed light on the action itself as well as the motive. Saying that *S* did *A* simply because she wanted to is not to give a very explanatory account of the agent's reason and perhaps it could even be claimed that *S* had no reason at all. Karlsson doubts that even in cases where there is nothing more to be said about an action than that the agent "wanted to do it", it might be questioned whether that particular act should qualify as human action, properly speaking. In any case, Karlsson believes that the 'Humean' models describe cases where there is something more to be said about an action than simply that the agent had an urge to do it. Yet, he believes that those reading Hume on the standard interpretation do not make a very clear attempt to distinguish between the agent's motives and her reasons. On the first alternative (figure 4.2) the reason and the motive that the agent has become the same. However, if we take a look at the second alternative (figure 4.3) the motive and the reason become more easily distinct from each other even though the boxed items do seem separate from the agent's motive to do *A* which is mainly her desire to do it. This should not be properly seen as the agent's reason to do *A* but rather that we should look for the

agent's reason in the boxed items above.

Finally, Karlsson asks "Why does S 's desire to realize or achieve G , so described, not serve by itself as a motive to act (namely, as a motive to realize or achieve G)?" (Karlsson, 2006, 243). While that surely might be thought to be the case, it does not serve as a motive by itself since it is incapable of producing any action without the agent being able to know what course of action to take in order to achieve G . The desire to achieve G does therefore not serve as a motive for action and is incapable of doing so unless combined with a judgment (Karlsson, 2006, 243).

Karlsson is only concerned with the traditional interpretation of Hume's theory but he also claims that a more accurate depiction can be given of the theory in what he calls "Hume's actual account of motivation" (Karlsson, 2006, 246). His concern is primarily with the relationship between desires, or sentiments, and cognition as presented in Hume's work. The parts of the *Treatise of Human Nature* Karlsson believes to be the most important are 2.3.3, 2.3.9 and 3.1.1. To begin with, Karlsson makes a note of the fact that Hume's motivational account and his idea of the good and the bad are very much intertwined. For Hume, the good is pleasure in prospect; something that promises the agent pleasure if it be obtained. The desires that the agent forms are based on her judging that a given object has "pleasure in store", to use a phrase favored by Karlsson. Likewise, the agent forms an aversion when she judges that the object offers pain (Karlsson, 2006, 244). Those ideas of pain or pleasure that await us are what the desires or aversions are founded upon and this view has been referred to as "psychological hedonism" (Árdal, 1966, 69-79); (Karlsson, 2000, 16-21). What Karlsson believes to be Hume's actual account may be shown in the following figure nr 4.5.

Figure 4.5: Hume's model



Here, *O* represents the object that has pleasure in store for the agent. This figure presents a more complex relationship between reason and motive. In this figure, the motivational process begins with a cognition where the agent judges by the usage of reason that *O* has pleasure in store and that this pleasure might be obtained by the given means. As has already been mentioned, Hume famously maintains that reason is inert, meaning that the judgments in this case must be as well. However, as presented here and in Hume's own text, these rational judgments cause us to form desires, making their alleged inertia a lot less obvious than originally maintained. However, Hume also maintains that "reason alone can never produce any action" (Karlsson, 2006, 249) which should perhaps be interpreted as a note

on how sentiments are needed in order to produce desires. That does not mean that reason plays no part but rather that it cannot produce an action by itself. That entails that motives are not subject to our understanding or cognition but rather that the motives are productions of sentiments, or desires. Passions are what motivate but reason's role is of no less importance. Even though Hume maintains that reason is inert and can never produce an action on its own accord he also claims that

Reason can have an influence on our conduct 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 connection of causes and effects, so as to afford us means of exerting any passion (T 414).

Here, a role of reason in the creation of a motive is emphasized. Reason can cause an action, but only through the passion it creates. It can never serve to move an agent on its own accord but it can influence our actions. That suggests that the role of reason may be read as more than merely instrumental.

These functions of reason can be found in figure 4.5. There we can see how the cognition serves to inform the agent S of the existence of O and how it furthermore provides S with a way in which O may be obtained. It is only after the recognition of the existence of O , the observation that O has pleasure in store and the judgment about how that pleasure might be obtained, that S decided to A in order to fulfill her goal.

Now, Karlsson raises the question of whether Hume may be read as maintaining that we can be motivated by reason. However, Hume does assign a great role to desire, meaning that it is not the case that Hume believes reason to be capable of moving an agent to act on its own accord. However, Karlsson claims that since he still grounds the motivational process to a large extent in cognition, and if certain cognitions dispose agents to actions and motives are subjective states that dispose an agent to action, it seems that perhaps Hume has more in common with the motivational rationalists than the traditional interpretation maintains. It is still incredible that Hume would allow for the reason to be labelled as a motive since motivation still rests heavily upon sentiments and in fact, reason only serves through the sentiments.

What Karlsson believes to be the case with Hume's own account as presented in figure 4.5 is that Hume does in fact distinguish between an agent's reasons

and his motives while maintaining a strong relationship between the two. In particular, the agents having a reason to act in a certain way can lead him, causally, to be moved to act in that way. Karlsson believes that the items in the upper box constitute the agent's reasons for action while the items in the lower box represent the agent's motive. In that way, the motivation is justified by the reason given and the reason also presents a motive for the agent to act.

To sum up, Karlsson presents the merit he sees in reading Hume in the manner presented above. For one thing, if we read Hume in this way we can distinguish between motives and reasons for action where the reason is what justifies the action and the motive is what drives the agent to action. Secondly, the traditional interpretation insists that the agent's reason for action is mainly made up by her desire for a given object. The third point is that even though Hume distinguishes between reason and motive he is still able to present a relationship between them. Karlsson claims that they are related through practical reason both because it shows why a motive is worth having and because the reason excites the motive, even if it is through the medium of passion. The last point is that this reading presents a single account of motivation with moral motivation as a special case meaning that there is no other account needed as is sometimes the case.

In this chapter I have attempted to describe an alternative interpretation of Hume's account of moral motivation. The main difference is that on this reading, further role is assigned to reason as it is believed less clear that reason has no role to play in the constitution of moral motivation. What remains to be seen, and will be discussed in chapter 5 is how this reading differs from the traditional interpretation in situating Hume's skepticism. In other words, an exploration of what this means for Hume as a skeptic about practical reason remains to be seen. In the following chapter we will take a further look at the three ways in which practical reason can be presented and subsequently analyze the two representations of Hume's work by using those ideas.

5 Placing Hume

In the beginning of this thesis I set out to do several things. The main goal was to determine whether Hume must necessarily be read as a skeptic with regard to practical reason. In order to reach a conclusion in the matter, I aimed to clarify several matters. First of all, an understanding of the different ways in which one might regard practical reason is essential in order to discuss the subject in any depth. I focused upon three different accounts, leaving aside others that might also be relevant. The first of these was an account of practical reason that limits it to a merely instrumental role, meaning that reason is not allowed any other role in directing or producing action than determining means to ends that are provided for us by other faculties than reason. I doubt we could find an account that would reject this role to practical reason, but what sets this reading apart is that it denies the possibility of reason having any *other* role than the instrumental one.

The second account I chose is that of reason serving to motivate an agent to act. This is a view that is often attributed to Immanuel Kant, who maintained that our recognizing that we have a *reason* to act, also necessarily provides us with a *motive* to do so. This is a so-called *internalist* understanding of motivation, meaning that we do not need any faculties, other than reason, to be moved to seek our ends.

The third account is closely related to the second one. It maintains that our *ends* can be chosen rationally: we have the possibility to choose certain goals by the application of reason alone. This is connected to the motivational question in the sense that if something is an end provided to us by reason, and we are motivated to seek it, we are thereby moved by the force of reason. This third account is also connected to the instrumental account, but negatively, so to speak. On the merely instrumental understanding of reason the possibility of reason selecting our ends is rejected.

Having established three different ways of looking at practical reason, what remained, was to determine Hume's stance on those issues. In order to do that, I chose two readings of the account of motivation (including moral motivation)

provided in Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*. One of these readings is entirely traditional. On that reading, Hume is commonly contrasted with Immanuel Kant, meaning that Hume comes out as skeptic about any role played by reason in moving us to act other than the instrumental role.

In addition, a second way of reading Hume was examined, a view explicated by Mikael M. Karlsson, and others. On this reading, Hume's view of the participation of reason in motivation provides reason with a richer role than the traditional interpretation, meaning that, while it is recognized that Hume is not a motivational cognitivist (like, say, John McDowell and, according to most interpreters, Kant) - insisting, as Hume does, on the sentimental character of motives or "passions" and their categorical disjointness from cognitions - reason can nevertheless be seen as providing us with ends (discovering goods in prospect as a matter of fact) and as serving as the starting-point of motivation by "exciting" or causing "passions".

One question that has not been specifically considered in this thesis is what is meant by *reason*. It is palpable that when writers as different as Hume and Kant speak of "reason", they may have very different things in mind. In summing up here, I will understand reason as Hume did - which I *have* previously discussed - namely as the faculty through which we discover truth and falsity. The objects and deliverances of reason are things, such as factual judgments, that are capable of being true or false.

Instrumental reason

No one doubts that Hume thought of means-ends reasoning as partially directive of our actions. As we have said, many think him skeptical about *other* forms of practical reason. Jean Hampton, however, argues that Hume was skeptical about practical reason entirely, since, even though he recognized that instrumental reasoning is directive of practice, he thought that not acting in the way that instrumental reason has revealed as the means by which to achieve such ends as we desire to achieve is not a *rational* failure, since, as we explained, no action, sentiment or volition is the kind of thing that can be true or false and can thus not conflict with, or contradict, reason according to Hume. On these grounds, Hampton views Hume denying that instrumental reason is *practical*; and she thus sees him as a total skeptic about practical reason. My conclusion was that if practical reason is understood in Hampton's way, then perhaps that can be said. However, this seems to me to be an unacceptably narrow view of what it means for reason to be practical. If instrumental

reason plays an important role in directing our actions, then certainly such reason deserves the title of *practical reason*—I believe that this is what most philosophers have always thought—and since Hume does think that means-ends reasoning plays such a role, I think, along with most other expositors, that he is not a skeptic about practical reason in its instrumental form.

What Hume has most often been considered to be skeptical about is whether could play an important, or even essential, role in providing us with ends and/or moving us to action. I now proceed to reflect upon what we have discovered about those matters in this thesis.

Rational ends

The idea of rational ends has already been discussed in general in chapter 2.4, but what remains is to sum up what we have learned from that.

It has been maintained here that according to the standard interpretation of Hume on practical reason, Hume recognizes a certain role for reason, namely instrumental reason, in directing our actions or even choosing among alternative possibilities for action in the context of deliberation; reason may direct action to the extent of informing us of what actions may be done in order to achieve certain ends. But on that sort of interpretation, Hume denies any wider role to reason in determining actions. In particular, Hume is thought to disallow reason any role in determining our ends.

However, as we have seen, Mikael M. Karlsson maintains that Hume may be interpreted differently; and on the interpretation Karlsson suggests, Hume allows reason an important role in determining the ends that we aim at realizing in our actions.

What makes something an end is that we are moved to pursue it, then it is evidently whatever moves us to pursue something that sets that thing as an end (Karlsson, 2000, 35).

Now, Karlsson admits that for Hume it is *desire* or *sentiment* ("passion") by means of which we select ends to be aimed at through action and through whose influence we pursue our ends. The question is, though, whether this is sufficient to deny, as does the standard account, that reason has any significant role to play in the selection or setting of ends. Karlsson's claim is that, according to Hume's main account of these matters (to which Hume allows for certain exceptions), reason does

play an essential role. For it is by means of reason that we discover, or at any rate judge, that there is pleasure or pain in prospect¹. Whether or not there is pleasure in prospect for us in a given situation is a matter of fact; and such a judgment can be either true or false. Now, Hume evidently maintains, that it is the discovery (through reason) of pleasure in prospect that excites, or awakens in us, the desire to realize that pleasure, which we must do through action. The desire, according to this account, is a sentimental *reaction* to a discovery of reason. And it is in desiring to realize some pleasure in prospect that we recognize something as a practical end and set ourselves that end.

Now, Karlsson makes clear that, in Hume's view, were human animals not such as to react sentimentally in this way to the discovery of pleasures in prospect, then such discoveries would not function as grounds for selecting, or setting ourselves ends; and that human animals do react in this way is a *contingent* fact of human nature: a human animal that did not so react, even if endowed with reason, is hardly inconceivable. To understand this is to understand that it cannot be reason *alone* by means of which we select and set ourselves practical ends. That is accomplished through the mediation of sentiment or passion. About the possibility of *unaided* reason performing such a function, Hume may certainly be called a skeptic.

Nonetheless, the human animal *is in fact* such as to form certain desires, and thus to set herself certain ends, in consequence of making certain judgments, which are deliverances of reason. And on Hume's account, according to Karlsson, this is the way in which ends are normally selected and set. Ergo, if Hume is interpreted in this way—which, we should notice, is entirely consistent with the argument he gives against his rationalist targets—then reason normally plays a significant, indeed an essential, role in the setting of practical ends. Our judgments cause us, albeit in a defeasible manner, to recognize certain things as ends to which to aim by means of causing us to form desires to obtain or realize such things. And if this is right, then Hume cannot be considered a skeptic concerning practical reason in what Karlsson calls its *teleological* (as opposed to its *instrumental*) role. Karlsson goes so far as to describe Hume as a *teleological rationalist*, though hardly of the same kind as Kant (as Kant is usually interpreted) or as Hume's rationalist contemporaries. For they are thought to claim that the selection or setting of ends could be accomplished—at least in a certain range of cases—by reason *alone*, unaided by passion or sentiment; and that, of course, Hume emphatically rejects. Hume also differs from them in

¹For simplicity, we will here leave pain out of account.

thinking of the goods at which we aim as (with limited exceptions) *pleasures*, even when we consider *moral* goods; and this is a commitment that Kant and Hume's rationalist targets would surely reject (Karlsson, 2005, unpublished).

Reason as motivation

It seems impossible to deny that Hume is committed to the view that only passions, which are sentiments, incapable of truth or falsity and hence hardly deliverances of reason, can motivate us to act. All of our motives are passions, none are cognitions. Reason alone, Hume repeatedly insists, is in this sense "inactive", "inert" and "the slave of the passions".

Since this is indisputably Hume's view, Hume is thought, on the standard interpretation, to deny to reason any significant or necessary role in the production of motives. According to that view, the starting point of action is always a desire. We desire something and thus select it, or set it to ourselves, as a potential end to be realized or obtained through action. Means-ends reasoning informs us as to how this end may be achieved: what sort of action can get us to our objective. The desire for the end is thus transformed into a desire to act in the relevant way: it becomes a passion or motive. Of course, we may have various desires whose realization cannot all be achieved; and instrumental reasoning may reveal to us various possibilities for action. Through deliberation, which Hume unfortunately discusses very little, we may therefore choose to let some of our desired ends go by, and may choose one kind of action over another. Moreover, the process is essentially causal and the connections are defeasible. So we may not actually wind up doing anything much, even when we understand how ends that we desire may be obtained. But this is the normal process, according to the standard interpretation of Hume. The intervention of reason in the motivational process is merely that of means-ends reasoning, and that is "inert"; it is only relevant to motivation through being applied to the search for means to achieve some end that we antecedently desire. "You can get a cold beer by putting two Euros into that vending machine" provides us with no motive to do anything; it can only play a role in directing our actions in case we happen to want to get ourselves a cold beer.

Interpreting Hume in this way represents him as a skeptic with regard to reason as a source of motivation. But, again, Karlsson maintains that Hume may, and should, be understood otherwise. In the last section, we reviewed the interpretation according to which Hume recognized a significant (and in most cases essential)

role for reason in the choice and setting of ends. Practical reason was seen, according to Karlsson's interpretation, as having a teleological role. That was based upon the idea that it is reason that delivers judgments about pleasure or pain in prospect. In the human animal, a judgment that there is pleasure in prospect² (this judgment being a deliverance of reason) will normally cause an individual to desire to realize or obtain that pleasure, whereupon she will cast about for a means—a way of acting—to accomplish this. In case the means are not already established by habit, the individual will resort to instrumental reasoning to know how her end may be realized. Judging that her end may be achieved by acting in a certain way, her desire to realize her end is transformed into a desire to act in that way—in other words, into a passion or motive. The passion or motive belongs entirely to sentiment, and not at all to reason. Thus, a judgment of reason *alone* cannot constitute or produce in us, a motive to act; unaided reason is "inert". Still, on this interpretation, a judgment of reason can produce in us a motive to act, *through the mediation of sentiment*, and this is what most often happens in tis Humean account. Moreover, the judgment can be the originating point of the motivational process; it does not rest upon an antecedent desire in the agent for what emerges as the practical end.

On this account, Hume comes out as a skeptic concerning unaided practical reason as a source of motivation; and he is certainly that. But he is not a skeptic concerning practical reason as a source of motivation on that account, because its deliverances cause or excite motives in us; these are sentimental, lack truth value, and so on, but are responses to cognitive judgments. The judgments could be fairly described as motives, in the sense of subjective states that move us to act, but only at one remove, without which they would not move us to act. Karlsson points out that this interpretation of Hume in no way contradicts his argument against his rationalist targets, or what would be his argument against Kant as the latter is normally understood; for they insist upon their being motives that are purely creatures of reason: that we can be moved by certain rational judgments in themselves, independently of sentiment (they have in mind moral motives in particular); and that, again, Hume indisputably denies, both in morals and elsewhere.

Hume's opponents would also certainly want to reject Hume's *psychological hedonism*—the view that we are motivated only by desires for *pleasure*—for they certainly think that pursuit of the morally good is not to be understood as a form of the pursuit of pleasure, whereas Hume does seem to think precisely that (Karlsson,

²Again, for the sake of simplicity, we will leave pain out of the account.

2005, unpublished).

On Karlsson's non-standard interpretation, Hume utterly rejects *motivational internalism*—examined earlier—which is, in brief, the idea according to which when one had judged that she ought to act in a particular way, or that this would be the best way for her to act in her circumstances, she necessarily has a motive to act in that way. Many internalists want to insist that it is the very judgment itself that *is* the motive: judgment (reason) and motive are *identified*. There are other internalists who do not insist upon this identification, but an internalist of any kind will insist that there is a *necessary* (perhaps logical or conceptual) *connection* between having a reason to act in a certain way and having a motive to act in that way. *Motivational externalism* denies this necessary connection between (and certainly the idea of the identity of) reasons and motives, and on Karlsson's interpretation (and perhaps any plausible interpretation), Hume is an externalist. Nonetheless, Hume substitutes something important for the internalists' necessary connection, namely a systematic causal connection rooted in human nature. Hume could agree that without there being at least a systematic connection, we would hardly be able to characterize anything as a *reason for acting*. It has been emphasized by many writers (for instance, by Thomas Nagel in his *Possibility of Altruism*, and John McDowell in several articles) that what we call a reason for acting must be the kind of thing that moves us to act. On this ground, many thinkers subscribe to internalism. But Karlsson's interpretation of Hume seems to show that internalism is not a necessary consequence of this point. A systematic and regular—but not *necessary*—connection between what we call *reasons for action* and what we call *motives to act* suffices to sustain the point. Or put more puzzlingly, it is perhaps necessary that there be at least a systematic connection, such as Karlsson attributes to Hume; but this is compatible with an agent's having a reason to act in a certain way (something *fitted* to produce motivation to act in that way) without, in the given instance, having any actual motive to act in that way.

The last word

So, as I indicated right at the beginning of this work, whether Hume is a skeptic about practical reason depends very heavily upon what one has in mind in speaking of practical reason (or about reason altogether) and also very heavily upon how Hume is understood. The standard view considers Hume to be a skeptic about all forms of practical reason except instrumental reason. Practical reason in general

is commonly understood as reason that directs, guides or produces action in some significant way, and let us in this summary stick with that. Skepticism about one or another form of practical reason consists in the reasoned denial that it does direct, guide or produce action in any significant way. We have in this thesis examined various ideas about practical reason and various forms of it, and also two significantly different interpretations of Hume on these subjects.

According to the non-standard interpretation that we have discussed here in some detail, Hume need not be understood as a skeptic about *instrumental*, *teleological* or *motivational* reason in the way that he is usually supposed to be; but one must be very careful to distinguish what exactly he is skeptical about in this department from what he is not.

Now I find this non-standard interpretation, as presented and explicated by Karlsson (who himself cites other authors with a similar understanding of Hume) to be well argued and persuasive. But I think that it is not possible, and will never be possible, to prove that it is the best way to understand Hume. Hume's position is subtle, his texts are tricky, and it seems to me that he is not always clear himself about his own position. So there will be forever the possibility of doubt and scholarly debate.

What I find important, in the end, is not whether one or another interpretation is right, or whether Hume is actually one or another sort of skeptic about one or another sort of practical reason, but rather what we can learn from the investigation and whether, through it, we can come to a better understanding of the issues. So it is my principal hope that anyone reading this thesis, and through it entering, or pursuing further, the investigation, will have something to learn from it and feel that her understanding of these rather difficult and complex matters has, indeed, been deepened.

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