THE UNITY OF NORMATIVE THOUGHT
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1. Unity and uniformity
1.1 What is practical reason? Is it an intellectual capacity possessed by human beings in addition to a will? If so, what makes us animals—a will—is not what makes us rational—practical reason. Is it instead the self-conscious will? Such practical cognitivism unites the intellectual and volitional aspects of our agency. According to it, as I do not have a four chambered heart in addition to a heart, so I do not possess practical reason in addition to a will. Practical reason is instead our type of will. What makes us animals makes us rational.¹

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

I focus here on this second challenge with respect to the restricted class of normative thoughts about human actions. The source of the puzzle is that if practical reason is our will, practical thoughts have an essential link with acting. Only certain thoughts about our actions, though, seem to have such a link. First person present tense ones do. That is why thinking ‘I should φ’ but not so acting without excuse is irrational. Others do not. Nothing irrational in not acting when I think you should φ. What would it even be to ‘so act’?

Normative thoughts about our actions thus seem to come in two types, intentions and beliefs, which have different formal properties. If practical reason is our will, it only accounts for those intentions. How, then, is this class not a motley crew? Why does it not arbitrarily yoke together unrelated thoughts as does the class which includes all and only my beliefs about the discography of the musician Anohni, my affection for the characters from the animated television show Daria, and my hankering for Trifles? Without an answer, we lose the relationship between my and your thought about our actions and the one between my past and present thought about our actions. We thereby lose the possibility of advice,

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¹ See (McDowell [1979]), (Gibbard [2003]), (Korsgaard [2008, 2009]), (Boyle and Lavin [2010]), (Rodl [2011]), (Fernandez [2016]), (Ford [2016]), (Lavin [2017]), and (Marcus [2018]). Ancestors include Kant, who says that “the will is nothing other than practical reason” (Kant [1785] 4:412), and Aristotle, who says that “action is the conclusion of practical reasoning” (DMA 701*13).

² See (Fix [fc A]).

³ I focus on present tense thoughts about my and your actions. Take discussions of the former to also concern future tense thoughts about myself. Take those of the latter to also concern future tense thoughts about others and past tense ones about anyone.
agreement, apology, criticism, dissent, excuse, forgiveness, rebuke, reconciliation, regret, remorse, and the rest of the whirl of human life. We lose our grip on ourselves.

1.2 Two responses try to unify that class by denying the differences between normative thoughts which are intentions and those which are evaluative beliefs. Volitionism says that all such thoughts are tied to acting. When I think you should \( \phi \), then, the appearance of belief would mask the reality of intention. Practical reason would account for all such thoughts. The class would be unified because it includes all and only intentions.\(^4\) Evaluationism says instead that no such thought is tied to acting. When I think I should \( \phi \), then, the appearance of intention would mask the reality of belief. Theoretical reason, when its exercises have a certain subject matter, would account for all such thoughts. The class would be unified because it includes all and only evaluative beliefs about our action.

I shall argue that neither view can unify this class. Volitionism fails because the correctness conditions for my normative thought about your action come apart from those for any set of my intentions. These thoughts are not intentions. Evaluationism fails because there is no such separation in first person thought. These thoughts are intentions. The source of first problem is the separateness of persons, of the second the unity of the individual.

Although volitionists and evaluationists disagree about what thoughts constitute this class, they agree that its unity depends on the uniformity of its elements, as thus codified:

**Unity as Uniformity** A class of thoughts is unified only if its elements are of one type.

I reject this thesis. While volitionists and evaluationists try to fit all normative thoughts about our action into one mold but disagree on its shape, I explain the unity of this class in terms of the diversity of its elements. This class is unified even though some elements are intentions, others beliefs, because the correctness conditions for those beliefs depend on those for intentions. This class is unified because its diverse elements form an intelligible grounded system. So I shall argue.

1.3 Three caveats. First, most philosophers who think that normative thoughts are beliefs are not evaluationists because they are not practical cognitivists. They instead construe practical reason as a species of theoretical reason, distinguished from others because of its subject

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\(^4\) A variant says that although the thoughts are evaluative beliefs, a belief is evaluative because an intention partially constitutes it. This complication does not matter. My criticism is that there are not enough intentions to go around, which entails a paucity of beliefs partially constituted by them.
matter, whose exercises can influence those of our will. I ignore this view here but mention it
to distinguish evaluationism from it.  

Second, I talk about mental states for convenience. If you prefer mental acts, substitute decision to A for intention to A and judgment that X should A for belief that X should A. I would rather talk about exercises of the relevant capacities because talk of mental states or acts might encode metaphysical assumptions which I cannot address. Sticking to that terminology, though, would make this essay unreadable.

Finally, I never use the term ‘reasoning’. It tends to invoke a process of figuring something out which precedes and concludes in a mental act or state. As I explain at the end of the next section, although anyone with practical reason can engage in this process, it is inessential to the exercise of practical reason. I thus rarely discuss it. When I do, I use ‘deliberation’, not ‘reasoning’, to separate issues about it from those about the exercise of practical reason central to this essay.

2. The self-conscious will
I here outline practical cognitivism and emphasize the aspects which matter for this essay.

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

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

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7. Kant says that “The faculty of desire is the faculty to be, by means of one’s representations, the cause of the objects of these representations” (Kant [1797] 6:211). He calls this generic capacity ‘the faculty of desire’,
My cat is not self-conscious. He represents and takes means to ends but not knowingly. I do. That is why he cannot be irrational. I can. Still, my will is a capacity to realize representations. Since I am self-conscious, in an exercise, I represent an end and means which I thereby take as such. I succeed only when I do what I think by self-consciously taking sufficient means to my end. Practical reason is thus in part the self-conscious capacity to think and thereby do.

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

Theoretical reason is our capacity to know the world. An exercise about a cat slinking across my garden, say, is correct only if such an animal is so moving. She does not move because I so represent her. I instead so represent her because she moves. Since I am self-conscious, I recognize that what she is up to, and indeed whether she is up to anything, is independent of my thought about her. I recognize the independence of what I represent from my representation.

Practical reason, if it is our will, is our think and thereby do. An exercise about taking a dive as a demonstration for my pupils at Clown U., say, is correct only if I represent taking one and thereby do. I do not represent taking a dive because I am doing so. I instead am taking a dive because I represent doing so. That is why I am not taking a dive if I trip while walking or if I lose consciousness and fall even if my body moves as I move when I take a dive. When I trip, I am not taking a dive because I practically represent walking. When I lose consciousness, I do not practically represent anything and am not acting. I am instead taking a dive only if I am doing as I think. Since I am self-conscious, I recognize that whether I am acting and, if so, what I am doing depends on this thought about it. I recognize the dependence of what I represent on my representation.

reserving ‘the will’ for the rational species, while I call it ‘the will’ and use ‘practical reason’ for the rational species. I diverge because ‘desire’ might to a modern ear connote passivity, which Kant rejects (KpV 5:9n). See (Fix and Pendlebury [ms]) for more on Kant on the rational faculty of desire.

8. I assume here that someone is subject to a rule of practical rationality only if she can follow it in an exercise of her will. That is what I mean by representing and taking means to ends ‘knowingly’. See, among others, (Niko Kolodny [2005] 529), (Bratman [2009] 413), (Korsgaard [2009a] 29), (Schroeder [2009] 308), (Boyle [2012] 414-5), and (Broome [2014]). I take this condition to follow from practical reason being a self-conscious capacity exercised because of what licenses exercising it. More on such ‘rational basing’ in a bit.

9. This self-consciousness is evident early. My two year old nephew exemplifies it when he declares his need to potty, walks me down the hall, and instructs me on how to help and, especially, how not. Infants do not evidence it, but that is no matter. Capacities develop over time. Infants are at an early stage, all potential without actuality as yet.

10. See (Fix [fc]).

11. ‘In part’ because I am not trying to say everything about the nature of practical reason. In particular, I am not trying to ground non-instrumental standards for exercises. That stuff does not matter for this essay.
Doing thus depends on thinking. The reverse is also true. Consider how such a thought is properly formed only if I can act as I represent. To practically represent flying without mechanical aid to the edge of the earth, say, is incorrect. The earth lacks an edge, and I wings. To merely consider something I can do, though, is not enough to exercise practical reason. To wish or want to act in some way or wonder about acting that way when I know it is within my ability is not to exercise practical reason. That is why willing without acting can be irrational but wishing, wanting, or wondering without acting cannot. Similarly, willing to \( \psi \) when I know I cannot is irrational if not impossible but daydreaming about so acting is neither. In wishing, wanting, wondering, and daydreaming, I do not think so as to thereby do. In willing, I do and thus am practically irrational when I do not so act without excuse. Since I am self-conscious, I recognize that this relationship to doing is part of what makes the thinking the type of thought it is.\(^\text{12}\)

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

2.3 Another aspect of this capacity to emphasize is that its exercises are essentially first personal. To think so as to thereby do is to represent my own actions. Say you and I independently intend to catch the same cat. Although my exercise of practical reason succeeds only if she is caught, it matters how. If I am too lazy to set a trap or if we each set traps but she ends up in yours, only your exercise succeeds. I did not trap her. Say, instead, that I do not want to buy the trap, set it, and all that jazz but instead intend to get you to catch the cat. If you trap her without communicating with me, my exercise of practical reason still fails. If, though, you trap her because of my command, counsel, or coercion, my exercise succeeds. I do as I think, which requires thinking something for me to do.

This is why Christine Korsgaard says that an “action is an essentially intelligible object that embodies its reason, the way an utterance is an essentially intelligible object that embodies a thought” (Korsgaard [2008] 228). As only I can directly voice my thoughts and as I can directly voice only my thoughts, so only I can directly embody my intentions and so I

\(^{12}\) Compare Aristotle: “choice cannot relate to impossibles, and if any one said he chose them, he would be thought silly; but there may be a wish even for impossibles … . And wish may relate to things which could in no way be brought about by one’s own efforts … ; but no one chooses such things, but only the things that he thinks could be brought about by his own efforts.” (NE 1111b20-25)
can directly intend only my embodiment of them. I must act to get you to do something, must exercise practical reason to get you to do so. But I do not do something to get myself to do something. I just do something, just exercise practical reason. My thinking is thus immediately about my doing.\footnote{Compare Aristotle: “we do not deliberate even about all human affairs; for instance, no Spartan deliberates about the best constitution for the Scythians. For none of these things can be brought about by our own efforts. We deliberate about things that are in our power, and can be done”. (NE 1112a27-30). As with deliberation, so with intention.}

Another way to recognize this character of intentions is with cases in which I think that someone should act without realizing that I am that someone. Say I think that the junior member of the faculty should lead the strike. If ignorant of my juniority, I cannot intend to lead or be practically irrational for not leading. In fact, if I consider you my junior, taking the lead would be practically irrational. If I recognize my juniority, though, I intend to lead. To not without excuse is irrational. Intentions have an essential tie with doing which explains the possibility of this irrationality. Such irrationality is possible only when the thought is not only about me but recognized as such. Intentions are thus essentially first personal.

2.4 The final aspect of this capacity to emphasize is that to exercise it correctly is to base its exercise on what licenses that exercise. What I mean is that an agent correctly exercises the capacity in part by grasping what makes so exercising it correct.

Say I am walking to the store to get bourbon \textit{because} I am throwing a party to celebrate my partner’s job offer. This explanation is true only if I take his receiving the offer as my ground for walking to the store. That is what it is for that ‘because’ to be the ‘because’ of rational basing. Schematically, to exercise practical reason correctly is to intend to \( \phi \) and thereby \( \phi \) \textit{because} of \( \Gamma \), where \( \Gamma \) is what (a) licenses so exercising practical reason and (b) is my basis for so exercising it.\footnote{See (Neta [2018]; [2019]). Three comments. First, I can correctly exercise practical reason because of evidence of or testimony as to what licenses it. This qualification does not matter here. Second, my basis is what licenses so exercising practical reason, not the fact that so exercising it is licensed. Finally, since I am talking about correct exercises, I talk about what \textit{licenses} them. To talk about incorrect ones, I would talk about what I \textit{take to license} them. I focus on correct exercises because I think they are prior to incorrect ones. See (Fix [fc\textsubscript{A}]) for a version of constitutivism which supports this priority and (Fix [2020]) for an interpretation of the error condition which spells it out with respect to standards for our agency.} This is part of what distinguishes self-conscious capacities from others such as my capacity to circulate blood.\footnote{For similar accounts of self-conscious capacities, see, among others, (Moran [2001]), (Rodl [2007]), (Korsgaard [2009]), (Boyle [2011]), (Marcus [2012]), and (Kern [2017] ch. VI).}

Here is a way into this idea. Consider a question which asks for my grounds for acting. According to Elizabeth Anscombe, to accept the legitimacy of such a question is to acknowledge that I am acting intentionally. To answer ‘because of \( \Gamma \) is to explain what I am
doing in terms of why I am doing it. In contrast, to reject the question because I was unaware that I was φ-ing shows that I was not φ-ing intentionally. Readiness to answer is thus a mark of intentional action.\textsuperscript{16}

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

To answer a question which asks about the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason is thus not (just) to express theoretical knowledge. It is to articulate part of the exercise of practical reason. Only then is readiness to answer a mark of acting intentionally. Hence, practical reason is the capacity to think and thereby do because of what licenses so thinking and doing. Everything after ‘capacity’ specifies part of its nature and proper exercise, not something which might accompany that exercise.\textsuperscript{17}

3. Volitionism and the separateness of persons
Consider this argument:

\textbf{Volitionist Inference}

\[(1) \text{My normative thoughts about my present actions are intentions.}\]
\[(2) \text{If so, all normative thoughts about human actions are intentions.}\]
\[\therefore \text{All normative thoughts about our actions are intentions.}\]

The first premise is true if practical reason is our will and if the thoughts which are part of its exercise are normative thoughts. The second follows from the first if this class of thoughts is unified and if unity requires uniformity. The conclusion follows. That is how to get from

\textsuperscript{16} See (Anscombe [1957] §5), (Moran [2004]), (Ford [2015]), and (Lavin [2015]).

\textsuperscript{17} Here is why although anyone with practical reason can deliberate, it is inessential to the exercise of practical reason and never exhausts that exercise. Its inessentiality is why a mark of acting intentional is my readiness to answer a question about my grounds for acting, not my having asked and answered such a question before acting. It never exhausts that exercise because were it to, the exercise would not include doing as well as thinking. Practical reason would not be my will.
practical cognitivism to volitionism through the unity as uniformity thesis. That argument, though, is unsound. Volitionism cannot account for interpersonal normative thoughts.

3.1 Allan Gibbard offers the most sophisticated version of volitionism. He claims that “[t]hinking what I ought do amounts to deciding what to do” (Gibbard [2003] 17). “[D]eciding ... is not ... coming to a belief in some special kind of fact” because decisions “on what to do have an automatic bearing on what to do” (ibid. 5). He also says that the sense and significance of normative concepts “depends on their place in a broad kind of planning we carry out” (ibid. 21). Since ‘plan’ is his term for thought tied to action, intentions are the basis of all normative thoughts about our action. The simplest way to base such thoughts on intentions is for them to be intentions.

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

What other intention might work? Gibbard says it is an intention to were I you. That seems plausible because thinking that you should φ without recognizing that I should in similar circumstances is strange. That, though, just indicates an obvious inferential tie between thoughts about you and me. Gibbard claims more. He thinks that I “plan, hypothetically, for the case of being” you even though I am “under no doubt that” I am not and know I “couldn’t possibly be” (ibid. 51). Uttering ‘you should φ does not then express a thought about you tied to one about me. It expresses a thought about me in the same way as does uttering ‘I should φ were I to survive this’.

As an unconditional intention has an actual link with acting, so a conditional one has a possible link with acting. One conditional on survival does. I could make it through this! One conditional on being you, though, does not because I could not be you. To entertain φing were I you is to understand the impossibility of so acting just as is to entertain φing were I to not exist. I cannot intend such impossibilities.

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18 I talk throughout about an utterance’s expressing a thought. Token utterances, though, rarely express one thought. Context often clarifies. Otherwise, I specify. Similarly, I can perform different speech acts with one utterance. I stipulate that unless stated otherwise, all utterances are sincere assertions which all parties know are not commands.
Gibbard considers a similar objection which says that such a thought is impossible because there is no property of my being you. He responds by invoking David Lewis’s account of propositional attitudes as the self-ascription of properties (Gibbard [2003] 51-2; Lewis [1979]). To think that you should $\phi$ is then to self-attribute the property of not being in a world in which I am you in your circumstances but being such that were I, $\phi$ing would be the thing to do.

Grant, for the sake of argument, the possibility of the property and of thought about it. That is not enough. I can believe, and thus think about, much which I cannot intend. I can believe that the number 3 is the successor of the number 2 or that my Doktormutter is 68. I cannot correctly so intend because to act so as to realize those properties is impossible. Since I know that, such intentions are impossible for me because I can intend to $\phi$ only if I do not think that my $\phi$ing is impossible. Yet I know that necessarily, I am not you and thus know that I cannot exemplify the property of “being [you] in [your] exact circumstances” which is “exemplified by [you] and only [you] at a certain time” (Gibbard [2003] 51). In the same way, since I know that necessarily, I am not the number 3, I know that I cannot exemplify the property of being the successor to the number 2. Yet then I know that thoughts in part about my exemplifying these properties have no possible link with acting. They thus cannot be intentions, conditional or otherwise. The province of our agency is not so grand as to cover every object of thought.

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

3.2 Perhaps the solution is for my intention to feature you as do my intentions to sing your praises or accept your proposal. That uttering ‘you should $\phi$’ expresses a thought about you

19. The double negative matters. I need not believe that my $\phi$ing is possible. After all, I might want to discover whether I can $\phi$, which I might do by intending and thereby attempting it. As Kant says, “if we were not to be determined to the application of our powers until we had assured ourselves of the adequacy of our faculties for the production of an object, then these powers would remain largely unemployed. For ordinarily we learn to know our powers only by first trying them out” (Kant [1790] 5:178n).
does not mean that it is not an intention. Yet although that utterance expresses an intention involving you, that is no help. Let me explain.

I express an intention when I utter ‘you should φ’ because to speak is to act. That utterance realizes an intention just as does walking to the store to get scotch. Since an utterance with a second-person pronoun is felicitous only if I am addressing you, this intention features you in a specific way. To address you is not to speak about you or at you but to you in a way which manifests my intention to do so. To advise you, then, is to realize my intention to so advise in part by expressing it to you.

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

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

3.3 Finally, maybe volitionists should say that although certain normative thoughts about our actions are not intentions, they are derivative of intentions. Perhaps a wish is in effect an intention stripped of its tie to doing. Wish is like the desiccated raisin of intention’s juicy grape. When I do not take acting on a normative thought to be impossible, I intend. When I do, I wish, but wishes are as it were incomplete intentions.

While I shall claim that intentions are the basic type of normative thought and others depend on them, this is not the way to go. Wishes have all of the formal properties of an exercise of theoretical reason, not some but not all the formal properties of exercises of practical reason. In an exercise of theoretical reason, I represent something which is

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20. See (Moran [2018]).
21. T.M. Scanlon is thus wrong to criticize Gibbard on the grounds that “when I offer someone advice, saying that p is a reason for him or her to do a, I am not expressing a plan” (Scanlon [2014] 59). Although the letter of his complaint is wrong, its spirit is along the lines of the criticism I am developing.
independent of that representation as independent of it. That exercise is correct only if the world is as I represent it. My normative thought about your action, at least when I know I cannot help or hinder, has those features. I know that whether you should see the doctor does not depend on my representation any more than does whether the sun is warming the stone. I also know that this fact holds independent of my ability to do anything about it. Delete me from existence and still it is so. That is why I can have such thoughts about you when I cannot help or hinder your acting in the relevant way. Yet such thoughts are then part of the exercise of a capacity distinct from practical reason, not a derivative exercise of practical reason. They are succulent evaluative beliefs, not incomplete, dried out intentions.

3.4 The trouble for volitionism thus stems from the fact that the following sets of correctness conditions come apart:

(1) Those for your exercising practical reason in some way.
(2) Those for my normative thought about your so exercising practical reason.
(3) Those for my intending to act in any way.

The first set in part determines the second and third, but their other determinants do not line up. The first comes apart from the second when I cannot think about your exercise of practical reason, as when I am ignorant of your existence. It comes apart from the third when I cannot help or hinder that exercise, as when interaction is impossible. The second comes apart from the third when I can think about that exercise but cannot help or hinder it. I can thus have correct interpersonal normative thoughts when I cannot correctly intend. These thoughts have the formal properties of beliefs, not merely some of the formal properties of intentions. Even if to think what I should do is to intend, to think what you should do is not because we are separate persons.

4. Evaluationism and the unity of the individual
Consider this argument:

**Anti-Volitionist Inference**
1. My normative thoughts about your actions are not intentions.
2. If so, no normative thoughts about human actions are intentions.
\[\therefore \] No normative thoughts about our actions are intentions.
The previous section supports the first premise. The second follows from the first if this class of thoughts is unified and if unity requires uniformity. The conclusion follows. It is incompatible with practical cognitivism so long as the thoughts which are part of exercises of practical reason are normative thoughts. That is how to get the negation of practical cognitivism from the negation of volitionism through the unity as uniformity thesis.

If the thoughts which are part of exercises of practical reason are not normative thoughts, though, maybe practical cognitivists can endorse this argument:

**Evaluationist Inference**

1. My normative thoughts about your actions are evaluative beliefs.
2. If so, all normative thoughts about human actions are evaluative beliefs.

\[\therefore \text{All normative thoughts about our actions are evaluative beliefs.}\]

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

4.1 Whereas volitionists model interpersonal normative thoughts on first-personal ones construed as intentions, evaluationists model first-personal normative thoughts on interpersonal ones construed as beliefs about the correctness of exercises of practical reason.

I cannot make your decisions for you. My practical conclusions, about whether to \(\phi\) will result in my intending to \(\phi\). I can, however, think about whether to \(\phi\) from your point of view. If I think certain reasons tell decisively in favor of your \(\phi\)ing, I will express this thought in the judgment ‘you ought to \(\phi\).’ This claim expresses a recommendation to your will. I can, of course, do the same for myself: I can recommend an action for myself, without actually deciding to act—without forming an intention—by forming a judgment about what I ought to do.

(Hieronymi [2009] 213-4)

The parallel between interpersonal normative thoughts and first-person present tense normative thoughts means that exercises of practical reason are not normative thoughts.
Judging that [I] have most reason to \( \phi \) ... is a piece of theoretical reason ... . It is theoretical reason about a practical subject matter. It results in a belief or judgment about one's reasons for action. But *practical* reason is not reasoning about one's reasons for action. It is reasoning about whether to act. (Hieronymi [2009] 207)

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

As I have evaluative beliefs about your action, so I have them about mine. The former are about the correctness of your exercise of practical reason, the latter the correctness of mine.

Grant the possibility of evaluative beliefs about exercises of practical reason, whether yours or mine. Why think that intentions cannot also be normative thoughts? Evaluationists argue as follows:

(1) A thought is a normative thought because a normative concept features in it or, what is the same thing, because it concerns normative subject matter.

As a mathematical thought is such in part because of its subject matter, so a normative thought is such in part because of its subject matter.

(2) A belief is evaluative in part because a normative concept features in it or, what is the same thing, because it concerns normative subject matter.

Exercises of theoretical reason differ based on their content, and shared subject matter groups them into classes.

(3) Normative concepts do not feature in intentions because intentions concern what to do.

Intending is thinking about doing, not about why to do it. If these propositions are true and
if there is no other type of normative thought, all normative thoughts are evaluative beliefs.

I shall argue that the first proposition is false. Although beliefs are evaluative and thus are normative thoughts because a normative concept features in their content, intentions are normative thoughts because they function as such even without normative concepts in their content. In particular, I will claim that since practical reason is a self-conscious capacity which I exercise because of what licenses so exercising it, intentions are normative thoughts because I intend in virtue of taking so intending to be correct.

I argue for this conclusion in two ways. I first argue that since my readiness to articulate the rational basis of an exercise of practical reason is a mark of acting intentionally only if that basis is part of that exercise, my sense of the normative status of that exercise is part of it. I then argue that first-personal normative thoughts about action are possible only if I recognize the unity of the rational bases for my exercise of practical reason and for my exercise of theoretical reason about that exercise of practical reason. To recognize that unity is to recognize that I grasp that basis as the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason even in my exercise of theoretical reason about my exercise of practical reason. Since to grasp that basis as such is part of the exercise of practical reason, to have an evaluative belief about my action is to exercise practical reason. Both arguments shows\ that intentions are normative thoughts even without featuring normative concepts in their content because of their rational bases.

A caveat before I begin. I here consider only cases in which I correctly exercise practical reason. In particular, I set aside cases of Akrasia in favor of “simpler cases that promise to advance the debate”, in part because I think that cases of deviance and defect are explanatorily posterior to cases of the proper exercise of our capacities (Silverstein [2017] 357). Just as how my heart appears in the case of disease is not the proper basis for an account of the nature of the human heart, so how my agency appears in the cases of breakdown is not the proper basis for an account of the nature of human agency.

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23. The third proposition is also false. Say I am your dean and my end is to make it the case that you should do something. I claim that your shabby attire worries the helicopter parents and issue an edict that faculty must wear something nice, summer smart at least, in college. Or say my end is to infuriate you, and you hate arbitrary exercises of authority. Since no one cares about academic wardrobes, I issue that edict and make it the case that you should dress better. The concept \textsc{should} features in these intentions, in my end in the first, my means in the second. So, evaluationists need a more precise account of how a normative concept must feature in a normative thought. I suspect they will say it must involve predication in which I say that something has a property. However, since my criticism is that such thoughts need not feature normative concepts, I leave this issue aside.

24. I discuss how to understand these cases elsewhere (Fix [2018] 516-8). Let me note here that my account does not “reinterpret the cases so that the relevant agents turn out not to be acting contrary to their better judgments” (Silverstein [2017] 357). What I deny is that this shows that judgment and decision are distinct acts or, in my terminology, that to grasp what licenses my exercising practical reason is to exercise a capacity other than practical reason rather than to partially exercise practical reason. This separability no more establishes that
4.2 Although they use different terminology, evaluationists think that exercises of practical reason have rational bases. Pamela Hieronymi says that to exercise practical reason is to “reason about whether to act, thereby employing certain considerations as reasons” (Hieronymi [2009] 207). Matthew Silverstein says that “when I decide … on the basis of some consideration, I act for a reason” (Silverstein [2017] 358). That is to “act for reasons—and respond to those reasons as reasons” (ibid. 358n11). To employ and respond to a consideration as a reason to act as such is to act in some way on the basis of what I take to license so acting. So, an exercise of practical reason has a rational basis in virtue of my treating something as such a basis.

This rational basis is part of the exercise of practical reason, not the exercise of another capacity. It is what I articulate when I answer a question which asks for my grounds for acting, and the readiness to answer is a mark of acting intentionally only if that basis is part of the exercise of practical reason. As Hieronymi and Silverstein might put it, that is what it is for me to employ or respond to a reason in exercising practical reason rather than to represent a reason in an exercise of theoretical reason about an exercise of practical reason.

To take something as my rational basis for exercising practical reason and for it to be part of that exercise, though, is for that exercise to include a normative thought. After all, I am not unaware that in employing and responding to these considerations as reasons, I am taking them to license so exercising practical reason. Put otherwise, for me to intend to φ and thereby Γ, where that is the ‘because’ of rational basing, I must implicitly understand the relationship of Γ with intending to φ and thereby φ-ing as one of rational basing. That basis explains what I intend and thereby do only insofar as I take it to do so. That is why I am walking to the store to get bourbon because I am throwing a party to celebrate my partner’s job offer only if I take his receiving the offer as my ground for throwing a party with drinks which need bourbon.

To grasp that basis as such is to have a thought about the normative status of my exercise of practical reason which is part of that very exercise. It is to intend given my grasp of the propriety of so intending. So, intentions are normative thoughts even without normative concepts in their content.

4.3 Here is another way to the same conclusion. Consider the following passage:

than does the possibility that I am at odds with myself establish that I am two human beings.
I firmly believe that I ought to have lunch at home tomorrow. Actually, I know it. When I dine out, I tend to overeat. Plus, money is rather tight at the moment, and even a casual lunch out will cost notably more than a quick meal at home. Besides, I have all the fixings for one of my favorite sandwiches in the refrigerator … . I have firmly resolved the normative question … . I have not, however, decided where to have lunch tomorrow. Frankly, I have not even thought about it. I have not made any plans, nor do I even have any expectations as to where I will eat. I have, in short, no intention one way or the other. (Silverstein [2017] 357-8)

Silverstein concludes that proper exercises of practical reason need not involve normative thoughts. Grant that this description picks out a way an exercise of our agency might go. That is not enough for his conclusion because it does not settle how to understand that possibility. He interprets it as someone correctly exercising one capacity but not at all exercising another. Another option, though, is to interpret it as someone partially and incompetently exercising one capacity.

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

Which form of explanation fits the case in question? Am I exercising “theoretical reason[] about a practical subject matter” flawlessly without exercising practical reason or am I exercising practical reason partially and incompetently (Hieronymi [2009] 207)? The latter is the right answer.

Consider a dialogue. You tell me why we should eat in rather than out and declare

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25 Hieronymi and I likewise disagree about akrasia and Buridan cases (Hieronymi [2009] 202, 206-8). She interprets akrasia as a discrepancy between exercises of two capacities. I think it is the partial and incompetent exercise of one. She interprets Buridan cases as my exercising one capacity in a way which is compatible with my then exercising a different capacity in either of at least two ways. I think they involve my exercising one capacity in either of at least two ways which share some properties but not others.
that we should lunch at yours. When I get up, you ask where I am going. ‘To yours for lunch’ ‘Why?’ ‘You said to given $\Gamma$. ‘I said nothing of the sort! I said we should eat in given $\Gamma$. I said nothing about where to eat. The question did not arise!’ If you then deliberate about where to eat, citing everything in $\Gamma$, I will not take you to clearly distinguish what I sloppily elide.\footnote{26} I will think you mad.\footnote{27}

This dialogue is even worse as a soliloquy. Yet evaluationists model the proper exercise of human agency on it. They formulate two questions, ‘What should I do?’ and ‘What shall I do?’, and take my normative thought to constitute my answer to the first, my intention my answer to the second. To answer the first question correctly is then to exercise theoretical reason, which is in part to represent what is as it is independent of that representation. Since it is a self-conscious capacity, to exercise it correctly is to exercise it because of what licenses so exercising it. In this case, I represent the correctness of my exercising practical reason in a certain way. To exercise theoretical reason because of what licenses so exercising it is thus to exercise it because of what licenses my exercising practical reason in some way. So, I ask the question ‘What should I do?’ and answer $\phi$ because of $\Gamma$, where $\Gamma$ is what licenses so exercising practical reason and thereby licenses so exercising theoretical reason. I then ask a different question, ‘What am I to do?’ Since practical reason is a self-conscious capacity, to exercise it correctly is to exercise it because of what licenses so exercising it. Hence, I again answer $\phi$ because of $\Gamma$.

No one, though, can answer the first question without answering the second. The issue is not that the answers are the same. ‘What is the sum of 6 and 7?’ and ‘What is the only prime number between 11 and 17?’ have the same answer, but you can address one but not\footnote{26. A referee suggests that the oddity is pragmatic and stems from the fact that we tend to discuss lunch only when deciding where to eat. There are two problems with this response. First, it would undermine Silverstein's example on which mine is modeled. Second, were the oddity pragmatic, you could cancel it. However, the following dialogue is just as odd. Say you propose to set aside the question of where to eat and instead discuss where we should lunch. You tell me why we should eat in rather than out and declare that we should lunch at yours because of $\Gamma$. I agree. You then say ‘That settled, where shall we eat?’ before deliberating aloud and citing again everything in $\Gamma$. Since this dialogue is as odd as the original, the source of the oddity is not pragmatic. It is instead that evaluationists separate questions which cannot come apart in first person thought, as I will explain.\footnote{27. A referee suggests that the following example shows that this type of dialogue need not be odd. Say you sincerely argue that vegetarianism is obligatory for people like us. As the chat ends, I say ‘To Veggie Planet for lunch then?’ You reply ‘We should, but how about the steakhouse instead?’ Although I am setting aside Akrasia, let me explain why this case does not force practical cognitivists to posit a capacity distinct from practical reason. In their terminology, to register reasons but not act on them is to only partially ‘employ and respond to a reason as a reason to act’. Employment or response includes grasping and acting on a reason. In my terminology, you grasp what licenses exercising practical reason but you do not act on that basis. Since that basis is part of the exercise of practical reason, you are partially but incompetently exercising practical reason. If you set out for the steakhouse, you likewise are partially but incompetently exercising practical reason, though this time what is missing is the rational basis. The conflict between these exercises of practical reason, and especially the way that they cannot both be completed and so cannot both be correct, is enough to explain what has gone wrong without positing the flawless exercise of a distinct capacity. So, at any rate, I would argue were akrasia my topic.}
the other. Nor is the issue that what makes an answer to the first question correct is necessarily what makes an answer to the second correct. Certain questions about heat and kinetic motion, Superman and Clark Kent, or Mark Twain and Samuel Clemens have that profile, but you can address one but not the other. The issue is instead that the question ‘What should I do?’ contains the question ‘What am I to do?’ The former is about the correct answer to the latter. I answer it by figuring out the answer to the latter. Moreover, I understand this relationship between them. That is why I base my exercise of theoretical reason on what licenses my exercising practical reason in some way. To so base my answer, though, is to grasp the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason as such. After all, it is what I express when I answer a question about my grounds for acting, which is part of the exercise of practical reason if readiness to answer is a mark of acting intentionally. Hence, in thinking about what I should do, I think about what to do. Yet grasping the rational basis of my exercise of practical reason is part of that exercise. So, to grasp it without acting on it is to partially but incompetently exercise practical reason, not to exercise a separate capacity for normative thought without exercising practical reason at all.

What is possible interpersonally is thus impossible intrapersonally. When I think about what you should do, I in effect consider the following question:

(Q1) What is the correct answer to the question ‘What are you to do?’

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

(Q2) What is the correct answer to the question ‘What am I to do?’

To ask that question, I must recognize that the embedded question concerns me and thus that the grounds for answering the governing and embedded questions are the same. Yet I therein recognize the unity of my answers such that I cannot answer one without answering the other. What I grasp to answer each is what licenses exercising practical reason in some way. That is part of the exercise of practical reason since only then is readiness to answer a question which asks for my grounds for acting a mark of intentional action. ‘What should I do?’ and ‘What shall I do?’ are then not different questions because in asking them I recognize the unity of the ‘I’ which features in them and thus of the grounds for the answers to them.
First-person normative thought is thus no idle intellectual task. It is the serious business of shaping the world in an exercise of practical reason.

Evaluationists, though, thinks that such questions are distinct and such thought is idle. Either what I express when I answer a question about my grounds for acting is independent of the exercise of practical reason or I need to find it anew when I exercise practical reason. The first means that my exercise of practical reason lacks a rational basis. That is practical automatism. The second turns the mad dialogue into a soliloquy which is part of the proper exercise of our agency. That is practical schizophrenia.

In fact, Hieronymi and Silverstein build this schizophrenia into their account of the function of normative concepts. She says that an “ought claim … may be understood as a recommendation to practical reasoning, rather than a step in it” (Hieronymi [2009] 213-4). He says that “[t]his is what the normative concept ought is for. By telling you that you ought to perform some action, I can recommend that action as the outcome of sound practical reasoning” (Silverstein [2017] 375). Such a model of normative concepts, though, rules out the possibility of first person normative thoughts. Recommending requires separate persons. After all, I can recommend something to you only if I think I have an informational advantage over you. This is why I cannot recommend to you your own cooking or recommend to you a book store which you know better than I, at least without cause to think I know something which you do not. I cannot, though, have such an advantage over myself and thus cannot recommend anything to myself. This is why I cannot dine in on my recommendation, though I can on yours.

Normative concepts, then, are out of place in first-person thought if their function is to recommend. The only way for me to have a normative thought about myself, then, is for me to not realize it is about myself, as when I think that the junior faculty member should lead the strike but do not recognize my juniority. That, though, is not to ask and answer the question ‘What should I do?’ It is not to have a first-personal normative thought.

If first-personal normative thoughts are possible, their function is not to recommend. Yet once the question and the thought are first-personal, I cannot ask it without recognizing that to answer it I must answer the question about what I shall do. I thus recognize the identity of both the person who asks the question ‘What should I do?’ and ‘What shall I do?’ and of the answer, and the basis of that answer, to each question. Since that basis just is the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason, to answer these questions is to grasp that basis as such. To grasp that basis as such is part of the exercise practical reason. So, I cannot answer the question ‘What should I do?’ Since that basis is my sense of the normative status
of my exercise of practical reason, the thought which is part of an exercise of practical reason is a normative thought.

4.4 The trouble for evaluationism thus stems from the fact that these sets of correctness conditions are identical:

(1) Those for my exercising practical reason in some way.
(2) Those for my normative thought about my so exercising practical reason.
(3) Those for my intending to act in that way.

Anyone who can think such thoughts recognizes that identity. In doing so, I recognize that the rational basis for my exercise of theoretical reason—for my evaluative belief—is the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason—for my intention. To grasp the rational basis for my exercise of practical reason, though, is to partially exercise it. That undermines the exclusion of intentions from the class of normative thoughts about our action, not because they have normative contents in their content but because they function as normative thoughts. Even if to think what you should do is to believe, to think what I should do is not because I am one person.

5. Diversity and dependence

5.1 Here is how things stand. Intentions are normative thoughts because for me to grasp what licenses my exercising practical reasoning is for me to partially exercise it.

(1) Intentions are first person present tense normative thoughts.

In contrast, interpersonal normative thoughts are evaluative beliefs because for me to grasp what licenses your exercising practical reason is not for anyone to partially exercise it.

(2) Normative thoughts about the actions of others are evaluative beliefs.

Moreover, if I can have such beliefs about your action, why not also about mine? To say I cannot is like saying I can know your mind but not my own.

(3) Some first person present tense normative thoughts are evaluative beliefs.
Finally, in contrast with the elements of classes which yoke together thoughts with no relationship to each other, normative thoughts about our action have something to do with each other.

(4) The class of normative thoughts about human action is unified.

Assume the unity as uniformity thesis and the last proposition makes the first incompatible with the second and third. Deny it and all are compatible, though compatibility does not unify the class. Moreover, although the first proposition is compatible with the third, given the lack of independence between such evaluative beliefs and intentions, such beliefs might seem explanatorily idle and superfluous.

The challenge, then, is to unify this class despite its diversity and despite the lack of independence between first person present tense normative thoughts which are intentions and ones which are beliefs. I shall argue that intentions are the basis of this unity. They are normative thoughts, and evaluative beliefs about human actions depend on intentions, though the dependence differs in the interpersonal and intrapersonal cases given the separateness of persons and the unity of the individual.28

5.2 I here explain the relationship between intentions and interpersonal evaluative beliefs. The correctness conditions for these beliefs depend on those for intentions. Classes of beliefs differ from each other because of their subject matters. These beliefs concern human actions, but not every belief about our action is in this class. My beliefs that they are a species of animal actions, that they involve expending energy, and that they occur in space and time are not. A belief is instead in this class if and only if and because it is about the correctness of an exercise of practical reason. Since the correctness of a belief depends on what is up with its subject matter, the correctness of my belief that your exercise of practical reason is correct depends on whether that exercise is correct.

Say I believe you should φ. The variable does not pick out a mere bodily movement. If I think you should hit the deck, you do not do as I think you should if you flop to the floor because someone shoves you or because you fall unconscious even if your body moves just as you move when you hit the deck. You do as I think you should only if you are acting that

28. Let me reiterate that my discussion of first person present tense thoughts also implicitly concerns first person future tense thoughts and my discussion of present tense thoughts about others also implicitly concerns future tense thoughts about others and past tense thoughts about anyone.
way. Given the interdependence of the thinking and doing which constitute an exercise of practical reason, to act that way is to intend to so act and to thereby so act. Hence, to believe that you should \( \varphi \) is to believe that your intending to \( \varphi \) and thereby \( \varphi \)-ing is correct. That belief is correct only if your so thinking and thereby doing is correct.

The class of normative thoughts about our actions thus includes interpersonal beliefs about whether intentions meet their correctness conditions. The correctness conditions of these beliefs depend on those of those intentions. These beliefs are unintelligible without reference to those intentions. That explanatory relationship unifies these thoughts.\(^{29}\)

5.3 Turn to first person present tense evaluative beliefs. How are they not redundant? Whereas evaluationists say that they are independent thoughts about the correctness of my exercise of practical reason, I shall argue that they explicate or articulate an implicit or tacit aspect of the exercise of practical reason. They are thereby not independent of intentions. I first model what it is to explicate or articulate something. I start with speech acts, move to self-knowledge, and finally claim that these beliefs constitute self-knowledge of the rational basis of my exercise of practical reason.

Consider the following utterances.

| \( \varphi \) | I recommend that you \( \varphi \) |
| \( \varphi \) | I order you to \( \varphi \) |

To utter something from the first column is to counsel or command. To utter something from the second is to do so in part by saying I am doing so. Yet each expresses the same command or counsel. This is why ‘Check out the new arcade’ and ‘I recommend that you check out the new arcade’ can constitute the same counsel just as ‘Check out the new arcade’ and ‘I order you to check out the new arcade’ can constitute the same command. In each, the second utterance in a sense does not add to the first and yet in a sense does not just repeat it. Its not adding anything is why it is infelicitous if you understand the first utterance. Its not being repetitive is why it is felicitous if you do not. The second utterance does not change the first but clarifies it, explicating what was implicit, articulating what was tacit, to secure uptake.

I can explicate or articulate these speech acts because they are exercises of practical

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\(^{29}\) Heath White and Michael Pendlebury aim to make expressivism compatible with truth conditional semantics by treating normative judgments as beliefs about the correctness of intentions (White [2009]; Pendlebury [2010]). While their project is not mine, we share a strategy of using intentions as the basis of (other types of) normative thoughts.
When exercised correctly, I perform such speech acts because of what licenses them. I thus know what I am doing and why and can explicate or articulate this knowledge.

Matthew Boyle and Richard Moran treat self-knowledge on this model. One way into this view is to think about how anyone in a position to assert ‘p’ can also assert ‘I believe that p’ and anyone in a position to assert ‘I believe that p’ can also assert ‘p’. This is puzzling since there is no logical, metaphysical, nomological, or otherwise objective link between these propositions. I have no view as to much that is true and am wrong about some of the rest. This is why ‘p but I do not believe that p’ and ‘I believe that p, but not p’ are paradoxical but not contradictions.

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

Consider now this list of utterances:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>I see p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>I hear p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Although that discussion is about utterances, Moran and Boyle hold a similar view about thought. When I believe that p, I am thinking about p, not about my belief. Still, I am not ignorant that I believe that p rather than, say, suppose or imagine it. The type of mental state or act in question is implicit or tacit in that although it is not my focus, I can explicate or articulate it through reflection. I thereby possess self-knowledge which consists in the

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30. See (Moran [2001]; [2012]) and (Boyle [2009]; [2011a]; [2019]; [fc]). I cannot do justice to this ‘reflectivist’ view of self-knowledge, and nothing here turns on the ins-and-outs of the debate about it.
explication or articulation of what was implicit or tacit in my thought about the world.

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

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

Consider my evaluative belief about your actions. I therein believe that your exercising practical reason in a certain way is correct because of the grounds for your so exercising practical reason. In the interpersonal case, my belief is independent of your intention because of the separateness of persons. In the intrapersonal case, the unity of the individual undermines this independence. Still, the thought is about the grounds for my exercising practical reason in a certain way. It thereby explicates or articulates an aspect of that exercise, focusing on why I intend as I do instead of on what I intend. After all, I articulate it when I answer a question which asks for my grounds for acting, and what I articulate must be part of that exercise to be a mark of acting intentionally.

In effect, a correct evaluative belief about human action concerns an exercise of practical reason. In the interpersonal case, the correctness of this belief depends on the correctness of that exercise of practical reason and thus the correctness of the intention which partially constitutes that exercise. Since the person who believes is not the one who intends, I can exercise theoretical reason without your exercising practical reason. In the intrapersonal case, the correctness of the belief also depends on the correctness of that exercise of practical reason and thus the correctness of the intention which partially constitutes that exercise. Since the person who believes is the one who intends, though, I cannot exercise theoretical reason in this way without also exercising practical reason. To grasp what makes my so exercising practical reason correct as such is, after all, part of the exercise of practical reason. In this way, the evaluative belief, when correct, constitutes knowledge not just of what makes
my exercise of practical reason correct but also of it as my rational basis for that exercise. It is self-knowledge which explicates or articulates part of the exercise of practical reason.

Such a connection explains why the beliefs are not redundant. Self-knowledge has various roles to play in our lives. When I am φ-ing because of Γ, my focus is on the obstacles and opportunities in front of me. I take means to that end given my circumstances and skills. I might, though, need to think about whether so acting still makes sense. Do the means and end actually connect with the grounds for so acting or have circumstances changed things? To ask these questions, I must articulate or explicate my rational basis and thus need this self-knowledge. Similarly, when I seek your help or advice on pulling off my end, you need to know the grounds for my so exercising practical reason. Otherwise, your help or advice might conflict with what licenses that exercise and undermine its point. I thus must be able to tell you about it.

In these cases and others, first personal evaluative beliefs have an essential role to play despite their lack of independence from intentions. They are thus not explanatorily idle even though they depend on and are unintelligible without reference to those intentions. That explanatory relationship unifies these thoughts without obviating those beliefs.

5.5 Since that claim about those beliefs is likely a bit surprising, I will close by comparing it with a familiar thought in practical philosophy. Although it does not fit everything they say, I think that this account is the best way to understand the metaphor of ‘stepping back’ employed by, among others, Korsgaard and John McDowell.31 Consider these passages:

A lower animal’s attention is fixed on the world. Its perceptions are its beliefs and its desires are its will … . But we human animals turn our attention on to our perceptions and desires themselves, on to our own mental activities, and we are conscious of them… I desire and I find myself with a powerful impulse to act. But I back up and bring that impulse into view and then I have a certain distance. Now the impulse doesn’t dominate me and now I have a problem. Shall I act? Is this desire really a reason to act? (Korsgaard [1996] 93)

To count as being able to respond to reasons as the reasons they are, one must be able to step back, as it were, from the fact that a certain circumstance, for instance perceived danger, inclines one towards acting in a certain way, for instance towards

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31. See (Boyle [2011]) and (Moran [c]).
fleeing, and raise the question whether one should act in that way. If one resolves such a question and acts in the light of one's resolution of it, one's acting reflects the capacity that distinguishes rational animals from the rest. (McDowell [2010] 6)

Many readers interpret these passages as if they are about what must happen in self-conscious action. Read that way, they amount to an injunction to stop, deliberate, and reason. They treat reason like an officer at a sobriety stop, checking inclination or desire for fitness to drive, letting the sober continue while locking up the drunk. This is wrong in at least two ways. First, I can correctly exercise practical reason because of what licenses so exercising it without pausing and deliberating. Second and more fundamentally, it is as if I only exercise my rational capacities when disengaged, as if the exercise of reason starts when I step back and ends when I step forward, never to cross the abyss from reflection to action. Were that so, practical reason would not be my will. It would instead be an intellectual capacity whose exercises could influence those of my will in the way that the cop is not the driver of the car and only has indirect and momentary influence on the route driven.

Read properly, though, these passages concern a potentiality which distinguishes rational animals from others. They concern something only rational animals can do, but not something which is the only expression of our rational agency. To ‘step back’ is to reflect on the exercise of practical reason, to make it explicit or articulate, so as to determine whether to continue with it. It is the reflective use of the very capacity exercised in the ‘engaged’ perspective. To ‘step forward’ is to continue or halt the exercise because of what licenses so exercising it or not, as grasped in reflection. The exercise of reason does not start with the onset of reflection and cease with its conclusion. Reflection is instead a particular mode of that single exercise of reason which begins before it and continues after it. It is sufficient for me to be exercising practical reason, but it is not necessary. (Note the ‘if’ without an ‘only if’ in the last sentence of the passage from McDowell.)

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

In this way, the quotidian type of reflection which McDowell and Korsgaard call ‘stepping back’ is a version of what Kant claims is the point and purpose of the critical system, wherein “reason should take on anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and … institute a court of justice, by which reason may secure its rightful claims while dismissing all its groundless pretensions” (KrV Axi). The task of critical philosophy is to come to reflective knowledge of the extent and limit of the proper use of reason. The task of reflection in ordinary life is likewise for reason to secure its correct exercises while putting a stop to incorrect ones. That is the role of first personal evaluative beliefs which secures their legitimacy despite their lack of independence from intentions.

6. Unity through diversity
Practical cognitivism says that practical reason is the self-conscious will and thus that the thoughts which are part of its exercise are intentions. One challenge is to unify the class of normative thoughts about our action. Volitionists, evaluationists, and I all take intentions as the basis of this explanation, but we treat them differently. Volitionists say that all normative thoughts about our action are intentions, volitionists that all are beliefs about the correctness of intention. I instead say that intentions are the basic type, but not the only type, of normative thought about human action. Intentions and evaluative beliefs are normative thoughts but are not on a par because those beliefs depend on those intentions, though in different ways in interpersonal and first personal cases. Such is the explanation of the unity of this class of thoughts if we are rational animals and if what makes us animals makes us rational.
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