

- 1987b. "Direct Reference, Propositional Attitudes, and Semantic Content." *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 15, pp. 47-87. Reprinted in *Propositions and Attitudes*, edited by Nathan Salmon and Scott Soames. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988. pp. 197-239.
- Sorensen, Roy. 1996. "Modal Bloops: Why Believable Impossibilities are Necessary." *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 247-261.
- Stroll, Avrum. 1953. "A Problem Concerning the Analysis of Belief Sentences." *Analysis*, pp. 15-19.
1954. "Believing the Meaningless: A Reply to Mr. Mellor." *Analysis*, pp. 45-48.
- Taschek, William W. 1995. "Belief, Substitution, and Logical Structure." *Noûs*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 71-95.
- Willis, Richard. 1956. "Mr. Stroll on Belief Sentences." *Analysis*, pp. 94-96.
- Yagisawa, Takashi. 1984. "The Pseudo-Males Argument." *Philosophical Review*, vol. 93, no. 3, pp. 407-418.

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY  
Volume 39, Number 2, April 2002

## "OUGHT" JUDGMENTS AND MOTIVATION

Michael Pendlebury

### I. BEARINGS

Here's a story one often comes across in metaethics. Moral judgments appear to have two crucially important features: *first*, that they are truth-aptness expressions of belief and, *second*, that they have motivational force. But according to the story these two properties are inconsistent, for beliefs, which belong to the domain of the *cognitive* and aim merely to represent the world, can have no impact on behavior in the absence of motivating desires, passions or intentions, which belong to the domain of the *conative* and aim to change the world.<sup>1</sup> For example, your belief that there is an ice cream cone in your hand will not cause you to eat it unless you want to. Competing metaethical theories are sometimes cast as alternative ways of responding to the tensions represented here<sup>2</sup>—with stereotypical cognitivists accepting that moral judgments are truth-aptness expressions of belief and seeking a special explanation of their motivational force, stereotypical noncognitivists accepting that moral judgments have motivational force and seeking a special explanation of their apparent truth-aptness, and others trying to carve a space for themselves between these two.

I want to expose some oversimplifications in this story. I do this by setting out some important data that the story fails to address, and showing how it is possible to accommodate these data on the basis of a straightforward "good reasons" analysis of the meaning of "ought" judgments. The account that I will present involves a minimal cognitivism which explains why some "ought" judgments have determinate motivational force while others do not. This modest but attractive solution to the problem of motivation has two crucial features. First, it applies with equal force to all "ought" judgments regardless of whether they are advanced from the moral point of view, and it is therefore not threatened by the existence of amoralists or moral nihilists. Second, it does not in its own right involve a commitment to any particular metaethical theory. This shows, I take it, that the problem of motivation does not provide a very good framework for the major metaethical debates. Although I say a little more about this in my final section, my chief goal is simply to present my solution to the problem of motivation along with some of the most important considerations that support it.

In dealing with the issues that concern me I will often speak in the voice of someone committed to internalism with respect to the motivational force of reasons and the relevant "ought" judgments. Along the way I will even provide some arguments in support of this internalism, but it is not my main purpose to defend internalism, and I do not regard these arguments as compelling. My central thesis is simply that *moral*ity is *irrelevant to the fact that certain "ought" judgments have determinate motivational force*. Although this thesis combines especially well with internalism, my arguments in support of the thesis can, as I will show, be adapted to suit the externalist.

Many of the things I say in this paper have been said by others elsewhere. What I take to be novel about the paper is the way in which it combines various ideas scattered through the literature to formulate and defend an interesting and distinctive position, which is summarised at the start of section 6.

## 2. MINIMAL COGNITIVISM

Even a robust noncognitivist should not doubt the *apparent* truth-aptness of moral judgments—or of other practical or evaluative judgments advanced from a nonmoral point of view. For there is no *linguistic* impropriety in someone's asserting that such a judgment is true or false, and there is no difficulty in interpreting such an assertion in everyday discourse. Someone who seriously advances

- (1) It is true that we must never lie merely makes an emphatic commitment to
  - (2) We must never lie.
- Someone who seriously advances
- (3) It is false that we must never lie merely commits herself to
  - (4) We may sometimes lie.

Such linguistic facts are, moreover, easy to accommodate theoretically by noting that the relevant notion of truth *may* be understood minimalistically. Minimalist truth could also be appealed to in order to make sense of other linguistic affinities between practical and evaluative judgments and ordinary factual declaratives, including the ways in which they can be imbedded in complex sentences, arguments, and longer pieces of discourse.

It is, therefore, appropriate to count such judgments as (at least) *minimally truth-apt*, and thus to endorse what could be described as *minimal cognitivism* with respect to them. There is no good reason for a robust noncognitivist to question this move.<sup>3</sup>

## 3. MOTIVATIONAL DATA

Although the picture sketched at the beginning of section 1 is correct about the apparent truth-aptness of moral judgments, it does not, as I shall argue in this section, do adequate justice to relevant data on motivation. To begin with, I would like to suggest that the presumption that beliefs *cannot* have motivational force is far from obvious.<sup>4</sup>

It is true that sometimes when a belief seems to have motivational force it is reasonable to insist that the existence of a desire or other passion is presupposed. Consider this case:

You are driving your car at speed when a dog rushes into your path as if from nowhere. The moment you register its presence you hit the foot brake with full force. It is reasonable to say that what caused you to do this was your sudden realization,

- (5) There's a dog! —which is of course a belief.
- It must, however, be conceded that this belief would not have had its motivating

effect in the absence of a concomitant desire not to hit the dog, or some standing desire which affects your driving generally, such as the desire not to collide with anything in the road or the desire not to kill or injure an animal. But if you enjoyed killing or injuring dogs and didn't mind minor collisions, the belief expressed by (5) might not have had the same impact.

However, when an apparently motivating belief is about one's own desires, interests or concerns rather than things or events in the environment, it is not so easy to relocate its motivational force to an independent conation, as the following case illustrates.

Although you haven't been considering the matter at all, one day when you are reading the newspaper it suddenly dawns on you that, as you would put it,

- (6) It would be in my best interest to find (or: What I really want is) a new job,

and this realization (which is an occurrence belief or judgment) causes you to turn immediately to the "Situations Vacant" pages.

No doubt someone could insist that what moves you here is not your judgment, but the desire to find a new job. But is this desire really distinct (and not merely notionally distinguishable) from your judgment? Or should we perhaps assume that you have a standing desire for your best interest (or for what you really want), and that this desire gets activated by a judgment such as (6)? It is not clear that we must give an affirmative answer to either of these questions. Thus the view that belief cannot have motivational force in its own right is not by any means obvious.

Just as significant at this stage of the argument is that many moral judgments do not have what I will call "determinate motivational force."<sup>5</sup> For example, there is no

reason to think that someone who commits herself to (4), or to either of the following, is motivated by that commitment to act in any particular way:

- (7) I am not obliged to marry him.
- (8) Clinton ought to have lied about his relationship with Lewinsky.

It goes without saying that, in combination with the agent's desires, inclinations, preferences, intentions, and other beliefs and judgments, (4), (7), and (8) could incline her to a variety of possible behaviors. But these judgments do not have any *particular* motivational force which can be determined from *their contents* in the way that, under normal circumstances, judgment (6) goes with the inclination to take steps to *get a new job*.

However, some practical moral judgments do normally have this sort of motivational force, including, most notably, those that are simple, unqualified and in first-person, present-tense form, with "ought," "must" or an equivalent as the salient modal auxiliary.<sup>6</sup> For example, someone who has a serious commitment to

- (9) I ought to repay him for his kindness, or to the somewhat stronger
- (10) I must repay him for his kindness,

normally has *some* inclination to do something to repay the person in question. These motivational inclinations may be so weak that they are completely overwhelmed by other forces at work in the agent's psychological economy, and all I am claiming is that first-person, present-tense judgments like (9)–(10) normally come with an absolutely minimal motivational tug in an identifiable direction.

It might be thought that this fails to apply in the case of someone who is so depressed that he is unable to do much of what he thinks he should. Such weakness of will need not, however, mean that his

"ought" and "must" judgments come with no motivational inclination at all, but only that this inclination is so weak that it is very easily overcome by his feelings of powerlessness, despondency and despair.

Apart from simple practical moral judgments in the first person and present tense, the relevant judgments with the most obvious claim to determinate motivational force are those which clearly imply these. This includes, e.g., (2), which implies

(11) I must not lie,

and

(12) No one should ever harm anyone else just for fun,

which implies

(13) I should not (= ought not to) harm Bruce just for fun.

As a concession to motivational externalism, I have been saying that judgments expressible by sentences like (9)–(13) *normally* come with a corresponding motivational inclination, allowing for the possibility that this inclination depends on passions accompanying the judgments. I am, however, strongly disposed to the internalist view that these judgments are *inseparable* from the corresponding motivational inclinations. In partial support of this I note that ordinary people without philosophical commitments would not normally consider utterances of sentences like (9)–(13) to count as sincere assertions (and thus as expressions of genuine judgments) if the speaker did not have corresponding motivational inclinations. Furthermore, claims like

(14) I ought to repay him for his kindness, but don't have any inclination whatever to do so

have a somewhat paradoxical air, suggesting that a special interpretation is required to avoid contradiction; and it would be fairly natural to interpret a sincere utterance of (14) as equivalent to something like either

(15) I ought to repay him for his kindness, but have hardly any inclination to do so,

or

(16) Most would agree (or: it is natural to think) that I ought to repay him for his kindness, but I don't have any inclination whatever to do so.

Externalists undoubtedly have the resources to answer this argument. However, in order to keep things simple, I now proceed on the assumption that internalism is correct. I will show how my reasoning can be adjusted to accommodate the externalist at the end of section 5—after pressing the case for internalism a little further than I do above.

I turn now to my most central thesis, viz., that *the distinctive motivational force of judgments like (9)–(13) has nothing whatever to do with the assumption that they have been advanced from the moral point of view*. That they have this motivational force is to be explained, rather, in terms of two factors (in addition to their connections to the first person and the present tense): *first*, the meanings of the relevant modal auxiliaries (primarily "ought" and "must") and, *second*, the fact that these judgments are practical rather than theoretical. No doubt this requires some elaboration.

Note first that the practical/theoretical distinction I am drawing is simply that between "must" and "ought" judgments in which the grammatical object of the modal auxiliary expresses an action that the judgment requires or recommends (as in the case of (9)–(13)) and those in which it expresses a state of affairs that the judgment presents as evident or likely. Consider your judgment

(17) I must be away from home

when you wake up in the middle of the night in unfamiliar surroundings, or your conclusion

(18) I ought to arrive on time

when you are checking on the progress of your bus. (As (18) illustrates, whether a particular "ought" sentence expresses a practical or a theoretical judgment may depend on the relevant context.)

With respect to the second of the two factors I have mentioned, it should be clear from (17) and (18) that theoretical "ought" and "must" judgments do not have the same motivational force as their practical counterparts even if they are in the first person and present tense. For your commitment to either (17) or (18) requires no motivational inclination toward any particular action. It is, however, notable that your commitment to either of them *does* require an inclination to *believe* a particular proposition, viz., that you are away from home (in the case of (17)) or that you will arrive on time (in the case of (18)). In other words, the difference in the nature of the inclination involved in practical and theoretical judgments of the relevant types is fully determined by the nature of what the object of the modal auxiliary expresses. This in turn suggests that there is no need to posit separate senses for practical and theoretical uses of these modal auxiliaries.<sup>7</sup>

To return to the first factor, note that there is also no need to posit ambiguities between moral and nonmoral senses of the relevant uses of "ought" and "must." In terms of Ockham's Eraser,<sup>8</sup> an important methodological principle in semantics which enjoins us not to posit senses beyond necessity, the common philosophical assumption that such ambiguities can be taken for granted must be rejected out of hand.<sup>9</sup> Thus, when I said earlier that "the distinctive motivational force of judgments like (9)–(13) has nothing whatever to do with the assumption that they have been advanced from the moral point of view" and also that it stems from "the meanings of the salient modal auxiliaries," I did not contradict myself, for these meanings are not tied to morality.

To appreciate that morality is indeed irrelevant to the distinctive motivational force of the relevant practical judgments, notice that this motivational force is unaffected if we assume, e.g., that the judgment has been accepted from a purely prudential point of view. Moreover, its motivational force can easily be *undermined* by the addition of the adverb "morally"—just as it can be undermined by the addition of "legally," "in terms of the way they do things around here," "for the sake of etiquette" and other such qualifying adverbs in the same semantic field. An amoralist or moral nihilist who is seriously committed to (9) for completely selfish reasons still has some inclination toward appropriate action. But if she is seriously committed to

(19) *Morally* I ought to repay him for his kindness,

the adverb "morally" actually cancels the semantic requirement of motivational force. This is evident from the fact that there is nothing paradoxical about her judging either

(20) Morally I ought to repay him for his kindness, but I don't have the slightest inclination to do so

(which gives a third possible reading of (14)) or

(21) Morally I ought to repay him for his kindness, but morality is just a load of bunkum which any rational person ought to ignore.

More generally, the belief that morality requires or recommends some action will motivate only those who already have some commitment to morality—or a desire to be seen as moral, a fear of the consequences of not acting morally, or some other non-moral reason to follow the dictates of morality.<sup>10</sup>

Least this reasoning be misunderstood, let me add that I am not claiming that the

motivations of someone who is committed to morality are not in any way influenced by that commitment, for this is clearly false. My position, rather, is that considerations about morality have nothing to do with the determinate motivational force of simple, first-person, present-tense "ought" and "must" judgments which is fixed by the contents of those judgments. Someone may nonetheless challenge my denial that (19) carries this motivational force on the ground that (19) logically implies (9). But this is not so, as is evident from the fact that an amoralist, e.g., could consistently accept (19) while denying (9). This is exactly analogous to the fact that somebody could consistently hold that she ought to keep a gun while acknowledging that legally (i.e., in terms of the law) she ought not to, and it exemplifies the same principle in the logic of the relevant class of adverbs.

#### 4. THE MEANING OF "OUGHT"

In terms of the analysis of "ought" that I want to push,

(22)  $x$  ought to  $A$

is roughly equivalent to

(23) There are good reasons for  $x$  to  $A$ .

The same applies to "should" judgments that are equivalent to (22). Analogously,

(24)  $x$  must  $A$

is roughly equivalent to

(25) There are compelling reasons for  $x$  to  $A$ .

The difference between these analyses reflects the fact that "ought" can be outweighed while "must" cannot, and also that "ought" leaves far more room for excuses than "must."<sup>11</sup>

In terms of these analyses someone who asserts (8) is committed to

(26) There are good reasons for Clinton to have fied about his relationship with Lewinsky,

and someone who asserts (2) is committed to

(27) There are compelling reasons for us never to lie.

Again,

(28) Even a robust noncognitivist should not doubt the apparent truth-aptness of moral judgments

(a claim which opens section 2 above), comes out as equivalent to

(29) Even for a robust noncognitivist there are good reasons not to doubt the apparent truth-aptness of moral judgments.

In all cases these equivalences seem to me approximately correct (and approximate correctness is all the precision that is required for the business at hand). The analyses also explain why it is especially appropriate to ask someone who makes a practical "ought" or "must" claim to identify what she takes to be the reasons for the relevant action.

These analyses of "ought" and "must" in terms of good or compelling reasons can be generalised effectively to cover theoretical as well as practical judgments.<sup>12</sup> To illustrate (without dirtying our hands with the details), (17) comes out as equivalent to

(30) There are compelling reasons for thinking that I am away from home,

and (18) as equivalent to

(31) There are good reasons for thinking that I will arrive on time.

Again this strikes me as approximately correct.

In the case of practical "ought" judgments (to which I will largely confine myself for the remainder of this paper), the

analysis gains further support from the evidently paradoxical air of claims like

(32) I ought to have resigned years ago, but there were no good reasons for me to have done so

and

(33) Queen Elizabeth ought to abdicate in favor of Prince Charles, but there are no good reasons for her to do this.

(33) also illustrates that it is the *speaker* or *judge* who commits herself to the existence of good reasons when she makes an "ought" judgment, and she does not thereby imply that the agent referred to in the judgment would endorse those reasons (or accept a first-person version of that judgment). This is evident from

(34) Queen Elizabeth ought to abdicate in favor of Prince Charles, but she has not thought the matter through carefully and is unaware of any good reasons to do this,

which, unlike (33), is by no means paradoxical.

It should be clear from these examples that I am presupposing a distinction between *there being a reason for an agent to do something* and *an agent's having a reason to do it*.<sup>13</sup> As I am using these locutions in this paper, the former applies if there is "a consideration which counts in favor of it"<sup>14</sup> regardless of whether the agent recognises this, while the latter applies if the agent herself counts something as a consideration that favors the action. It is of course the former notion that is operative in the good-reasons analysis of "ought."<sup>15</sup>

It is worth stressing that the good-reasons analysis in no way assumes that the good reasons that warrant an "ought" judgment must all be of one particular type, e.g., moral, legal, or prudential—or that they must all belong to a single, well-defined

normative system. Consider the following argument:

(35) You ought to go to the party. You promised her that you would; many of us will be disappointed if you don't; you could make useful business connections there; and I'm sure that you will enjoy it.

It is possible that the reasons specified here might warrant the "ought" judgment only if taken collectively. If so, the fact that some of them are moral reasons while others are prudential clearly does not undermine the judgment. (And this adds one more nail to the coffin of the thesis that "ought" is ambiguous between moral and nonmoral senses.)

The main attractions of the good-reasons analysis of "ought" are that it is simple, enlightening and agrees with the basic linguistic evidence. Since judgments with the form of (23) are minimally truth-apt, the analysis also underwrites minimal cognitivism for "ought" judgments, and rightly so. The only systematic criticism of the analysis I know of is due to Hector-Neri Castañeda, who saw it as unsatisfactory in the absence of an effective account of good reasons (which he found himself unable to provide).<sup>16</sup> However, we do have a reasonably good intuitive ability to apply the idea of good reasons in the relevant contexts, and can in general make sense of disagreements in those applications. We can, therefore, make productive use of the good-reasons analysis without agreeing on the correct theory of good reasons. And the fact that the analysis could easily be combined with alternative conceptions of good reasons strikes me as a strength rather than a weakness.

In any case, the following applications of the analysis do not presuppose the possibility of a correct theory of good reasons, or even that there *are* good reasons for

anything at all. All that these applications require is the assumption that people sometimes *judge* that there are good reasons for actions. And the source of what they count as good reasons when making such judgments (be it a Kantian good will, the content and strength of their desires, the dictates of their religion, the requirements of social norms, their ambitions for personal success or some social ideal, or whatever) makes absolutely no difference to my argument.

##### 5. MOTIVATIONAL APPLICATIONS

For present purposes the great value of the good-reasons analysis is that it yields correct results (as determined by the data in section 3) about which practical "ought" judgments have determinate motivational force corresponding to their contents, most notably, simple, unqualified "ought" judgments in the first person and the present tense.

As representative examples of practical "ought" judgments which are *not* in this group, consider the past-tense judgment

(36) I ought to have resigned years ago and the third-person judgment

(37) Queen Elizabeth ought to abdicate in favor of Prince Charles.

In terms of the good-reasons analysis these are equivalent to

(38) There were good reasons for me to have resigned years ago

and

(39) There are good reasons for Queen Elizabeth to abdicate in favor of Prince Charles

respectively. Since it is clearly possible for someone to endorse (38) or (39) without being motivated to do anything specifically determined by the contents of those judgments, the analysis explains

why (36) and (37) do not come with the relevant motivational force. Given the rest of her psychological economy, someone's endorsement of (36) or (37) may of course give rise to other motivational inclinations, e.g., to resign now (in the case of (36)), or to write a letter to *The Times* (in the case of (37)). But that is a completely separate issue.

Consider next

(40) I ought to resign

as an example of a first-person, present-tense "ought" judgment that does have such motivational force. In terms of our analysis (40) is equivalent to

(41) There are good reasons for me to resign.

I claim that an agent who is seriously committed to (41) has a reason to resign (even though it may not be a good reason), and, as an internalist about the motivating force of agents' reasons, I also claim that this reason carries a motivational inclination to resign (even though it may be extremely weak).

In support of these claims I note that we would normally be inclined to deny an utterance of (41) the status of a sincere, literal assertion if we thought that the speaker had absolutely no reason to resign, or absolutely no inclination to resign. Furthermore, the most obvious way of interpreting

(42) There are good reasons for me to resign, but I have absolutely no reason (or: inclination) to do so

is as an elliptical version of something like

(43) There are what others would count as good reasons for me to resign, but I have absolutely no reason (or: inclination) to do so (—for I do not accept the considerations I am thinking of as reasons to resign, let alone good reasons).

The suggestion here is that when we add the clause "I have absolutely no reason (or: inclination) to do so" to (41) to yield (42), this introduces a barrier between the agent and the reasons, if any, that there are for him to resign.

(In line with an observation in section 3, a similar effect could be achieved by adding a qualifier like "in terms of standard practice," "legally" or "morally" to "good reasons." For example, there is nothing intuitively untoward in

(44) Although there are *morally* good reasons for me to resign, I have absolutely no reason (or: inclination) to do so, since I don't give a damn for morality.

And there is of course no way that the semantics and pragmatics of practical judgments could show that we are or must be motivated by morality.)

The above evidence concerning the reason-expressing and motivational force of (41) and other similar judgments can be underpinned by a three-step theoretical argument, which I present in rather schematic form.

Note, *first*, that anyone who is seriously committed to a judgment with the form of (45) There are (or: were) good reasons for x to A

is committed to *reasons which he, the speaker or judge, accepts and takes to be good reasons at the time in question*.<sup>17</sup> This of course applies to (41), which has the form of (45). But the speaker or judge in the case of (41) is identical to the person whose resignation is at issue. Hence someone who is committed to (41) is thereby committed to *his having good reasons (of his own) to resign*. This first step of the argument could be summed up in general terms as follows: Because of identities arising from the first person and the present tense,

(46) *There are good reasons for me to A* pragmatically implies

(47) *I have good reasons to A.*

The second step of the argument aims to secure the claim that, if anyone accepts that there are good reasons for him to A, and therefore that he has good reasons to do so, then he *does* have a reason to A, even though it may not be a good reason. This move draws on my stipulation in section 4 that an agent's having a reason to do something is to be understood simply as a matter of there being a consideration which he (explicitly or implicitly) counts in favor of it.<sup>18</sup> (This holds regardless of whether the consideration does count in favor of it from a more objective perspective—and, indeed, regardless of whether there are determinate facts about such matters.) The thought that someone who is committed to (46) and (47) has a reason to A is only a tiny step beyond this principle. And it is a step which is easily justified. For we would, I think, doubt the sincerity of someone who uttered either (46) or (47) in the absence of any particular considerations which he counted in favor of his A-ing. But even aside from this, the contents of (46) and (47) are *themselves* considerations which our agent, through his commitment to these contents, tacitly counts in favor of his A-ing. They are, therefore, themselves reasons that he has to A.

The aim of the *third* step of the argument is to support the internalist contention that an agent cannot have a reason to A in the total absence of any motivational inclination to A.<sup>19</sup> This inclination may be very weak, and it certainly need not be strong enough to overcome contrary inclinations, ensure action, or rule out the possibility of weakness of will. But it must *exist* in order for the reason to be *the agent's own*. The mere fact that he is, say, disposed to utter a sentence expressing the relevant consideration either publicly or *in foro*

*interno* (however sincere he may tell himself he is) is clearly not enough—just as an obsessive idiot's repetitively muttering the laws of thermodynamics is not enough for him to believe their contents. For a reason to be the agent's, it must be *engaged* in his psychological economy. A theoretically attractive way of making sense of what this involves is simply by supposing that it is a matter of the reason's having motivational inclinations. I propose to follow this route.

Putting the three steps of the above argument together, we can conclude that someone cannot have a serious commitment to (41) without having some inclination to resign. Since (41) gives the meaning of (40), this applies with equal force to (40). Furthermore, since nothing in the argument depends on the specific contents of these judgments, it follows that every first-person, present-tense "ought" judgment of the same type as (40) has motivational force in its own right.

One likely objection to this argument is that one or more of the three steps it involves presupposes that the relevant agents are rational. My position is that these steps apply to all "rational animals," i.e., animals which are capable of acting intentionally, having reasons, and making the relevant judgments. In her most challenging guise, my imaginary critic insists that all three steps apply only to the restricted class of agents who are rational on the relevant occasions in the very different sense that they are *not irrational* then. Although she is willing to admit that it is impossible for a rational person to accept (46) without accepting (47), or to accept (46) and/or (47) without having a reason to A, or to have a reason to A without any corresponding motivational inclination, she holds that all of these are consistent with (and perhaps partly definitive of) irrationality.

I reply that there is nothing in my argument that presupposes that the agents concerned are not irrational. For the argument depends on the conditions necessary to warrant the ascription of certain judgments and reasons to any agent whatever. And what is crucial here is that the candidate judgments and reasons should be minimally engaged in appropriate ways in the agent's psychological economy.<sup>20</sup> Irrationality is a lack of consistency and coherence *within the system*. *Akrasia*, e.g., is not a matter of the agent's having excellent reasons for doing something which are so cut off from the rest of her psyche that they do not move her at all, but of the motivational force of those reasons falling so far short of their power as reasons that they cannot overcome countervailing pressures and ensure action. More generally, irrationally presupposes that the mental acts and attitudes concerned do some work within the agent's psyche even though they do not have the usual impact. It seems to me that my critic's objection to the three-step argument does not do full justice to this important point.

This does not, however, come close to a knock-down refutation of her objection, and I recognise that I am unable to produce one. One of the things I hope I have done in this section is to sketch some considerations that add to the attractions of the view that judgments like (41)—and therefore (40)—have motivational force in their own right. Readers who still hold that this applies only with respect to agents who are rational at the time in question could easily restrict the claim accordingly without compromising what I have called my central thesis, viz., that the determinate motivational force of simple "ought" judgments in the first person and the present tense has nothing to do with morality. To confirm this, notice that the particular example of a judgment which I have used to

illustrate my argument, viz., (40), could be advanced on moral, prudential, legal or other grounds, but it makes no difference to the argument which of these apply. Thus even if my explanation of its basic motivational force needs to be supplemented by a dollop of rationality, morality still does not enter into the explanation, and there is no reason to suppose that it is required.

Furthermore, externalists—who are committed to an absolute divide between the cognitive and the conative—could easily accept my arguments for my central thesis subject to those arguments being restricted to agents who desire (however faintly) to do what they believe they have a reason to do. Externalists should understand my concessive use of "normally" in section 3 as an indirect way of applying this restriction.

#### 6. SOME MORALS

The strong, internalist version of the position I have arrived at can be summarised as follows:

Only simple, first-person, present-tense "ought" judgments and others which directly imply them invariably carry determinate motivational force which is fixed by the contents of those judgments, and this holds independently of whether those who make these judgments are committed to the moral point of view. These facts are best explained by an appeal to a good-reasons analysis of the meaning of "ought" judgments in general, together with an internalist account of the basic motivational force of agents' reasons.

To get a weak, externalist version of the position, substitute "normally" for "invariably" and delete the phrase "together with an internalist account of the basic motivational force of agents' reasons."

In order to get to this position it was not necessary to assume that claims with the form of (23) are ever *true*, but only that they are sometimes *accepted* (typically in the guise of their "ought" equivalents). Let us now assume that such claims are sometimes minimally true.<sup>21</sup> This gives rise to the perplexing question of how their truth is possible. And here it is worth stressing that it is logically possible for such claims to be true even if there are never any good *moral* reasons to do anything.

This is not the place to attempt to make sense of the possible minimal truth of claims with the form of (23) and others of their ilk, including those with the form of (25). It seems to me, however, that it is this issue that should be seen as the primary locus for debates between robust cognitivism and noncognitivism, and that it should be possible to make considerable progress in these debates before the nature and authority of morality are brought into play. What I hope I have shown in this paper is that it is not necessary to ascend these sublime intellectual peaks in order to make headway on the humble problem of why certain identifiable practical judgments have determinate motivational force.<sup>22</sup>

*University of the Witwatersrand,  
Johannesburg*

## NOTES

1. As Searle puts it, the *direction of fit* of beliefs is *mind-to-world*, while that of desires, etc., is *world-to-mind*. See John Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), especially pp. 4-13.
2. See, e.g., Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), especially chapter 1, and "Realism," in *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by Peter Singer (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 399-410, and Jonathan Dancy, "Intuitionism," in Singer, *op. cit.*, pp. 411-419.
3. Compare, e.g., Crispin Wright, "Truth in Ethics," *Ratio (New Series)*, vol. 8 (1995), pp. 209-226; and Michael Smith, "Why Expressivists about Value Should Love Minimalism about Truth," *Analysis*, vol. 54 (1994), pp. 1-12. Note also that it is reasonable to construe Blackburn's quasi-realism as a sophisticated attempt to combine robust noncognitivism with minimal cognitivism. See, e.g., Simon Blackburn, *Essays in Quasi-Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), part 2.
4. Compare, e.g., Stephen L. Darwall, *Impartial Reason* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 39-41.
5. Compare, e.g., Gilbert Harman and Judith Jarvis Thomson, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 112.
6. In this formulation (which is not intended to be completely precise) "simple" is meant to exclude, e.g., judgments in which the "ought" or "must" occurs within the semantic scope of a logical operator like "if... then...," "not," or "possibly."
7. This suggests that there is no fundamental distinction between theoretical and practical "ought" and "must" judgments, because the former are concerned with what propositions to believe or accept, which is something that one *does*. I am inclined to agree with this view, but cannot pursue it here.
8. The phrase is due to Paul Ziff—see *Semantic Analysis* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1960), p. 44.
9. This is argued in detail by Roger Wertheimer in *The Significance of Sense* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), chapter 2.
10. This paper does not presuppose a particular answer to the question of what morality is, but it may be useful to note that, very roughly, I take norms of morality to be prescriptions that are crucial to general well-being. Whatever determines their proper content, it is clear that some agents may not accept such prescriptions.
11. Similar analyses of "ought," or both "ought" and "must," appear in, e.g., Kurt Baier, *The Moral Point of View* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1958), p. 222; J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Pelican, 1977), pp. 73-77; and Gilbert Harman, *The Nature of Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 117-119. A more detailed technical account which could perhaps be construed as an attempt to unpack this sort of analysis at a deeper level appears in Wertheimer, *op. cit.*, chapter 3. Darwall, who endorses Wertheimer's account (along with the thesis that "ought" and "must" are not ambiguous between moral and nonmoral senses), summarizes this account as follows: "In general, what a person *must* do from the point of view of a particular system of norms is what the norms of that system *require* him to do. And what, from that same standpoint, a person *ought* to do is what is *recommended* by the system's norms." (Darwall, *op. cit.*, p. 209.) Whatever its merits, I am disinclined to accept this as a satisfactory gloss on reasons analyses of "must" and "ought" because it

suggests that compelling or good reasons are always relative to a specific normative system. This is something I dispute near the end of section 4.

12. Compare, e.g., Mackie, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-75.
13. Compare Darwall's distinction between "reasons for an agent to act" and "an agent's reasons for acting." Darwall, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
14. I borrow this phrase from T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 17.
15. It is perhaps worth adding that in everyday discourse when we say that an agent has a reason we often mean to endorse it too. This possibility plays no part in what follows.
16. See Hector-Neri Castañeda, "Imperatives, Decisions, and 'Oughts': A Logico-Metaphysical Investigation," in *Morality and the Language of Conduct*, edited by Hector-Neri Castañeda and George Nakhnikian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), pp. 219-299, especially pp. 245-260. It is interesting to note that, despite his criticisms of the good-reasons analysis, Castañeda proposes an account of the truth conditions of practical "ought" judgments that can fairly be understood as a close cousin of that analysis (see pp. 275-279). Castañeda elaborates this account in great detail in his later work.
17. This point is closely related to G. E. Moore's well-known observation that it would be paradoxical for someone to assert "P, but I don't believe that P."
18. It is, however, worth noting that in everyday discourse sentences of the form "x has a reason to A" are often applied in other circumstances.
19. This is the main point at which I appeal to internalism about the motivational force of reasons. Such internalism is well supported in the literature, but often in a qualified form in which it applies only to rational or moral agents. See, e.g., Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), part 1; Bernard Williams, "Internal and External Reasons," in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 101-113; Darwall, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-58; Christine Korsgaard, "Skepticism About Practical Reasons," *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 83 (1986), pp. 5-26; and Scanlon, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-36. Arguments which attempt to undermine internalism on the ground that it cannot accommodate the existence or possibility of amoralists (see, e.g., David O. Brink, "Externalist Moral Realism," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 24, Supplement (1986), pp. 23-41, especially pp. 29-37) are ineffective within my framework, in terms of which morality has nothing to do with the determinate motivational force of the "ought" judgments which are most obviously motivating.
20. This is in turn a fairly obvious manifestation of the systemic nature of mental properties, or what Davidson describes as the "holism of the mental." Donald Davidson, "Mental Events," in his *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 207-225, p. 217.
21. On pain of paradox, no one could insist that there are good reasons to deny this. Suppose someone, call him "Mac," insists that
  - (a) There are good reasons for me (or anyone else) to deny that claims with the form of (23) are sometimes minimalistically true.
  - (b) Claims with the form of (23) are sometimes minimalistically true.
 Mac is clearly committed to (a)'s being minimalistically true. Now, since (a) has the form of (23), Mac is implicitly committed to
  - (23) Mac is implicitly committed to
  - (23) Mac is implicitly committed to
 However, if Mac is right about (a), then there is good reason for him to accept

(c) Claims with the form of (26) are never minimalistically true,

which directly contradicts (b). The paradox here is not of course logical, but pragmatic.

22. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Annual Conference of the Philosophical Society of Southern Africa, Muldersdrift, January 2000; the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, September 2000; the University of Cape Town, October 2000; the University of Waikato, November 2000; and the University of Auckland, November 2000. I am grateful to my audiences on those occasions for useful questions and discussion. I would also like to thank the following for stimulation, discussion and/or comments on various drafts: David Cockburn, Douglas Farland, Terry Horgan, Thad Metz, Darrel Moellendorf, James Pendlebury, Dave Schmidt, Mary Tjaitas, and two anonymous referees for this journal.

## THEATER, REPRESENTATION, TYPES, AND INTERPRETATION

John Dilworth

In the performing arts, including music, theater, dance, and so on, theoretical issues both about *artworks* and about *performances* of them must be dealt with, so that their theoretical analysis is inherently more complex and troublesome than that of non-performing arts such as painting or film, in which primarily only *artworks* need to be discussed. Thus it is especially desirable in the case of the performing arts to look for defensible broad theoretical simplifications or generalizations that could serve to unify and potentially comprehensively explain these difficult cases.

We have attempted one such generalization in a recent article,<sup>1</sup> in which we argue that the concept of representation can be used to explain the nature both of plays involving narrative fictions, and of performances of such plays. In this paper we shall further characterize and defend this account, and also give some reasons as to why it might be preferable to a leading alternative account of such plays and their performances, according to which a play is a *type*, whose performances are *tokens* of that type.<sup>2</sup>

We shall also briefly discuss the related and generally accepted view that performances are *interpretations* of plays,<sup>3</sup> and

show how our representational account introduces some new considerations into the discussion, that serve to undermine some common assumptions as to why that view is plausible.

### I. A MINIMALIST ARGUMENT FOR THE REPRESENTATIONALITY OF PLAYS

Rather than merely summarizing our previous account, we shall proceed by briefly reconstructing and extending it, making use of a relatively independent, and theoretically eliminative or minimalist, line of argument for it.

It is generally agreed that at least some artworks are representational rather than non-representational or abstract in nature, in that in some way they represent commonly recognizable entities or events. Thus we distinguish representational from abstract painting, broadly representational narrative works of fiction—including narrative plays—from formalist literary exercises, with similar distinctions being made for other art forms.

Thus it might be thought that a claim that fictional narrative plays, or performances thereof, are *representational* in nature is merely to state the obvious—and thus not to give a *theory* about the nature of such