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REASON EXPLANATIONS & THE AGENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Humean belief-desire accounts of motivating reasons have recently been challenged to explain two *prima facie* plausible ideas. First, from the perspective of the agent, our motivating reasons seem to be (putative) facts. In considering my reasons *prior to* and *in* ϕ ing, that is, it seems to me that I consider facts that favor ϕ ing rather than my own mental states. Second, in explaining actions in terms of an agent's motivating reasons, it seems to suffice to refer to the (putative) facts that so guided their action. In other words, beliefs and desires seemingly figure neither in the agent's, nor in the observer's perspective when they consider the agent's motivating reasons for ϕ ing. I argue against these complaints. First, reason explanations must involve some reference to the agent's mental states in order to avoid the otherwise persistent *Problem of Error Cases*. Second, there are in fact no considerations from the agential perspective that uniquely support the factualist account of motivating reasons. Despite initial appearances, their account of 'motivation as guidance' has no phenomenological upshot whatsoever — it is a purely explanatory notion. However, since reason explanations must involve the agent's perspective, we are once again led back to Humeanism concerning reason explanations. Thus, I argue, we have no reason to dismiss Humean belief-desire accounts of motivating reasons based upon factualist considerations regarding the first-personal and third-personal roles of motivating reasons.

Kurzfassung

Humeanische Überzeugungs-Proeinstellungs-Auffassungen von motivierenden Gründen wurden in letzter Zeit häufig herausgefordert, zwei auf den ersten Blick plausible Ideen zu erklären. Erstens erscheinen unsere motivierenden Gründe aus der Perspektive der Handelnden Fakten zu sein. Wenn ich vor und während dem Handeln über meine eigenen Gründe so zu handeln nachdenke, dann scheint es mir, als würde ich über Fakten nachdenken, die für diese Handlung sprechen, und nicht über meine eigenen mentalen Zustände. Zweitens scheint es auszureichen, Handlungen durch die motivierenden Gründe einer Akteurin zu erklären, indem man sich auf ebendiese (angeblichen) Fakten bezieht, die die Handlung so geleitet haben. Mit anderen Worten, Überzeugungen und Proeinstellungen scheinen weder aus der Perspektive des Handelnden noch aus der Perspektive des Beobachters eine Rolle zu spielen, wenn sie die motivierenden Gründe der Akteur*innen betrachten. Ich argumentiere gegen diese Vorwürfe. Erstens müssen Erklärungen anhand von motivierenden Gründen eine Bezugnahme auf die mentalen Zustände der Handelnden beinhalten, um das sogenannte "Problem der Fehlerfälle" zu vermeiden. Zweitens gibt es tatsächlich keine Überlegungen aus der Akteur*innenperspektive, die die faktualistische Darstellung motivierender Gründe eindeutig unterstützen. Wider der bestehenden Argumente gibt es keinerlei phänomenologische Realität von motivierenden Gründen die die faktualistische Auffassung eindeutig unterstützen. Somit argumentiere ich, dass wir keinen Grund haben, humeanische Überzeugungs-Proeinstellungs-Auffassungen von motivierenden Gründen auf der Grundlage dieser beiden faktualistischen Überlegungen zu den rollenbezogenen Erwägungen von Gründen aus der ersten und dritten Person abzulehnen.

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Writing this was fun. I've changed my mind a few times, mainly due to the convincing nature of my supervisors' arguments. Notwithstanding, I'm rather happy to say that the core of my convictions has remained unaltered, even if the terms in which it is couched have somewhat changed. I still think that motivating reasons are the gateway to accounting for the agent's experience on action — it's just that extant theories don't do a great job at actually capturing this convincingly.

But enough about me, this section is really about the people I would like to express my utmost gratitude to. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Paulina Sliwa and Niels de Haan. Their being so incredibly encouraging while remaining so utterly unconvinced by my original arguments was really the driving force behind this thesis. I cannot express how much I have learned from them, both in terms of philosophical content and style. This thesis would not have been without them.

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§1 INTRODUCTION

Anton Ford (2017) has recently argued that action theorists face a peculiar methodological choice. In theorizing action, Ford argues, we must decide whether we prioritize the features we ascribe to actions as we *observe* them from a third-personal point of view, or the one's we attend to from the first-personal perspective as we *perform* them. For every observer of an action, there is, after all, an agent of it.

The problem is this: even if an observer and an agent think about the very same action, their thought about it may fundamentally differ in both its goals and its primary objects of attention. In observing me rummaging for an umbrella, you aim to make sense of my action — your goal is to understand what I am doing. I, however, do not seek intelligibility; I seek an umbrella that will protect me from the rain on my way to work. My goal (viz. to get to work as dry as possible) is a given for me, it is something I reason *from* (Anscombe 1957). As such, my attention is directed at the rain and the last known location of the umbrella. For you, on the other hand, inferring my goals in opening all those cupboards is plausibly *part* of your inquiry precisely because it seems to be part of what it takes to understand what I am doing. Your attention is plausibly directed at my goals, motives, as well as the features of the environment I attend to. As such,

[the] philosopher [of action] must decide whether to account for (1) the kind of representation that is ‘of’ action in the objective sense that it is characteristic of someone who is *thinking about action*, (2) the kind of representation that is ‘of’ action in the subjective sense that it is characteristic of someone who is *performing an action*, or (3) the unity of these representations. (Ford 2017, 223; my emphases)

This puts pressure on Humean accounts of actions in terms of causally efficacious belief-desire pairs in a familiar way. Ford (2017, 233) thus goes on to complain that Davidson (1963) unreflectively theorizes “action from the standpoint of an observer, rather than from that of an agent.” This is reminiscent of Velleman (1992, 462), who argues that in defining actions as events motivated by belief-desire pairs, Davidson’s (1963) theory of action “fails to include an agent” at all. In a similar but more specific vein, Miller (2008, 225) argues that Davidson’s Humean belief-desire theory of motivating reasons cannot account for the role these reasons play “from the perspective of first-person deliberation.” From the first-personal perspective, the charge goes, it simply does not seem to us as if

we consider our own mental states in considering our motivating reasons. Rather, it seems to us as if we consider the facts that speak in favor of so acting. In defining actions as events caused by belief-desire reasons, Humeans thus entirely ignore the “representation that is ‘of’ action in the subjective sense that it is characteristic of someone who is *performing an action*” (Ford 2017, 223; my emphasis).

This provides an important motivation for *factualist* accounts of motivating reasons (e.g. Alvarez 2010). Factualists hold that motivating reasons are facts. They motivate this precisely by reference to what it is like for us *as agents* to consider our motivating reasons.¹ Prior to going for a walk, in considering my reasons for bringing an umbrella, it seems to me that I consider facts that favor my doing so, like the fact that it is raining. In subsequently bringing my umbrella, I proceed to act ‘in the light’ of this fact. Thus, what it is like for me to consider my reasons *prior to* and *in* acting seems to be just what it is like to consider facts. In holding that motivating reasons *are* facts, factualists thus claim to be able to account for the agent’s perspective on actions.

Since motivating reasons are typically taken to also be capable of *explaining* action,² factualists moreover argue that they can account for “the kind of representation that is ‘of’ action in the objective sense that it is characteristic of someone who is *thinking about action*” (Ford 2017, 223; my emphasis). If you ask me *why* I ϕ ed, what you are typically asking for is *my* reason for ϕ ing. In asking for my reason to bring an umbrella, however, my answer may simply be ‘Because it was raining’. The mere fact *that it was raining* seems to explain my action precisely because it was the reason I considered and in the light of which I acted.³ The promise of factualist accounts thus lies in their apparent capacity to account for “the unity of these [two] representations” of action (Ford 2017, 223). By theorizing motivating reasons as facts, that is, they seem to be able to capture both the agent’s *and* the observer’s perspective on action.

¹ See Miller (2008, 225), Alvarez (2010, 120), Hyman (2015, 168), Dancy (2018, 10), Singh (2019, 409), and Schlicht & Starzak (2023, 6).

² See Davidson (1963, 685), Raz (1975, 15-17), Smith (1994, 96), Dancy (2000, 101; 131), Darwall (2006, Chapter 1, footnote 3), Schroeder (2007, 14), Setiya (2007, 23), Alvarez (2010, 170), Locke (2015), Hyman (2015, Chapter 6), Alvarez (2017, §3), Mantel (2018, 15), Radcliffe (2020). Cf. Sandis (2013).

³ See Raz (1975), Collins (1997), Scanlon (1998), Dancy (2000), Bittner (2001), Alvarez (2010), and Singh (2019). Note that Singh (2019) is officially only concerned with motivating reasons. But since we use an agent’s motivating reason to explain their action, the extension of his account to at least some explanatory reasons comes quite naturally.

In this essay, I defend the Humean belief-desire theory of motivating reasons against these two complaints. I do this in two steps. First, I argue that we have good reason to hold that the full *explanans* in reason explanations does actually consist in the agent's mental states (§5). The reason for this is that this provides a natural solution to a pervasive problem that both factualist and non-factualist accounts of reason explanations face: *the Problem of Error Cases*. I thus argue that we have good reason to believe that the observer's perspective on action is best conceived of as involving the agent's perspective, i.e. their mental states, just like Humeans contend.

Second, I show that the phenomenological motivation that factualists cite in favor of their account is unfounded (§6). Despite initial appearances, factualists have in fact no grounds for claiming that they can uniquely account for what is like for us as agents to consider our motivating reasons *prior to* and *in* acting. Hence, we have no reason to dismiss the Humean belief-desire account of motivating reasons *because* they cannot live up to their first-personal relevance *prior to* and *in* acting. Additionally, I provide positive arguments for holding that Humeans can actually account for the phenomenology of considering one's own motivating reasons in explaining one's action *via* transparency accounts of mental states (§6.3). I thus conclude that if there is a distinct phenomenology to considering one's own reasons that resembles the phenomenology of considering supposed facts, then Humeans can account for this. Hence, if there is a distinctive "representation that is 'of' action in the subjective sense that it is characteristic of someone who is performing an action" (Ford 2017, 223), then Humeans can account for this at least as well as factualists can.

I shall adopt some notational conventions throughout. I use ϕ ing in order to cover a range of responses: acting, believing, adjusting one's judgment sensitive attitudes, etc. I shall use A to refer to agents, p to refer to propositions, and r to refer to reasons of any kind. So, ' $A \phi$ ed for r ' should be understood to stand in for some agent's acting/believing/etc. for the reason that something is (supposedly) the case, or for the reason that she believed that p and wanted to ϕ . As such, my usage of r is neutral regarding the exact ontology of reasons.

PART I

MOTIVATING REASONS TODAY

§2 THREE ROLES OF REASONS

To start, consider the following scenario:

[*rain*] Ada is in her apartment, getting ready to take a walk to her office. As she approaches her front door, she looks towards her window and sees that it is raining. Ada prefers to get to work dry rather than soaking wet from rain. So, she takes an umbrella with her.

Here are three observations about this situation that set the stage for the discussion to follow. First of all, given Ada's goals and preferences, there was something that actually spoke in favor of her taking the umbrella, namely, the fact that it was raining. The fact that it was raining objectively favored Ada's bringing an umbrella, given her preferences. Ada will likely cite this fact if she is pressed to justify her bringing the umbrella later on. She is also likely to take this fact into consideration as she is thinking about how she is going to get to her office.

Second, there is an explanation *why* Ada took the umbrella. Actually, there are several explanations why she did this. Here are some of them: it was raining; she wanted to stay dry and go outside; Ada's parents always insisted that she ought not to walk around with wet hair when it's cold out. All of these considerations explain Ada's taking the umbrella in a way, plausibly taking on different presuppositions. But assuming all of those considerations are true, all of them (at least partially) explain why Ada brought an umbrella.

Finally, there was something that motivated Ada to take the umbrella. What exactly this was is controversial, but it is nonetheless clear that there was *something* that motivated Ada to take the umbrella — otherwise she would not have taken it on her way to work.

These three observations map onto the three roles in which reasons are typically evoked in the philosophical literature:⁴

[There are] *normative* reasons, which are the reasons for which one ought to act; *motivating* reasons, which are the reasons for which one actually acts; and *explanatory* reasons, which are the reasons cited in explaining one's action. (Alvarez 2009b, 216)

⁴ See also Raz (1975), Dancy (2000), and Alvarez (2009a; 2009b; 2010; 2017; 2018), among others.

We can thus sensibly distinguish between three roles in which we use the concept of a reason: justification (or evaluation), explanation, and motivation (Alvarez 2010, 2017, 2018). This essay is primarily concerned with the concept of a motivating reason. As I will explain presently, motivating reasons seem to importantly incorporate explanatory aspects. Before I do this, however, let's briefly consider the justificatory and explanatory role reasons also play.

§ 2.1 Normative Reasons

A *normative* (or *justifying*) reason is a reason that objectively speaks in favor of some response (Scanlon 1998; Dancy 2000; Parfit 2011). The response may be an action, the formation of a belief (Dancy 2018), or the adjustment of a judgment sensitive attitude more generally (Scanlon 1998). Since favoring is an evaluative notion (Zylberman 2021), normative reasons can also be said to evaluate such responses. What speaks in favor of or evaluates responses are facts (Scanlon 1998; Alvarez 2010).⁵ Facts, in turn, are true propositions (Strawson 1985; Alvarez 2010). As such, normative reasons can typically be formulated via *that*-clauses. There is a normative reason for Ada to take an umbrella, namely, the fact *that it is raining*. In other words, the fact that it is raining objectively favors (or positively evaluates) Ada's taking an umbrella on her walk to work.

[*NR*]: r is a normative reason for A to ϕ iff r objectively favors A 's ϕ ing

This is a very minimal definition that allows for various specifications. First of all, this definition should be understood to be relativized to some time t and some context c . The fact that it is raining *here* favors my bringing an umbrella *now*, but not later and not elsewhere. One may want to argue that my *having* some normative reason depends upon my motivational (Williams 1981) or epistemic (Kiesewetter 2018) constitution, or both. The normative reasons one has would then be dependent upon one's beliefs and desires in some way. What remains true, however, is that normative reasons are facts that objectively favor responses, given one's beliefs and desires.

⁵ Or states of affairs (Dancy 2000). I will return to this point later. For now, it shall not deter us.

§ 2.2 Explanatory Reasons

An *explanatory* reason is a reason that explains some phenomenon. They explain *phenomena* because explanatory reasons can explain all kinds of things: events, processes, actions, etc. (Alvarez 2010, 27–30). There are reasons why it started to rain, why the street was getting wet, and why Ada took her umbrella to work. Explanatory reasons are thus not tied to action.

Explanations are often held to be constituted by facts (Strawson 1992; Alvarez 2010; Hyman 2015). This conception typically goes together with the plausible view that explanations don't just occur in the world for us to discover, explaining is something that *we do* (Strawson 1992). As such, "explanation is a relation between facts or truths, the relation of making intelligible or understood" (Hyman 2015, 158). We utilize facts in order to explain phenomena to one another. Explanations thus don't just spontaneously erupt. Rather, they are *cited* or *evoked* by someone in response to some problem or query (see Anscombe 1957, §5). Explanation is itself an act — the act of making intelligible or understood.

One fruitful way of thinking about explanations, then, is as *answers to questions* (Anscombe 1957, §5; Garfinkel 1981; Hyman 2015). As Strawson (1992, 109) puts it, it is in the first instance *people* who "explain things to themselves or others." Why did it start to rain? Because the clouds were saturated with water droplets. Why did Ada bring an umbrella? Because it was raining; because of her taught aversion towards wet hair when it's could out; because she wanted to go to work and stay dry. All of these answers cite (supposed) facts. All of these answers thus provide at least *an* explanation, even if not a full explanation, of the relevant phenomenon the question is about.

In a perfectly ordinary sense, these explanations all consist of (or at least involve) explanatory *reasons*. The reason why it started to rain is that the amount of water droplet in the clouds reached a critical point; the reason why Ada took her umbrella is that it was raining; and so forth. Since many facts may explain a given phenomenon, which of these facts we cite will be contingent upon the exact question we take ourselves to be answering (Garfinkel 1981). Explanatory reasons are in this sense constituents of answers to questions. Explaining is something we do, and it typically happens as a response to a problem or question. What we cite in these explanations are, *inter alia*, explanatory reasons.

So let's mark three features of explanatory reasons. First, the concept of an explanatory reason itself is not bound to action. There are explanatory reasons for agential and non-agential phenomena alike. There are reasons that explain the eruption of volcanoes, the erosion of mountains, as well as Ada's taking an umbrella. Second, if there is something like *the* explanatory reason for some phenomenon, then this will likely be determined by pragmatic considerations (Alvarez 2010, 29): who asked the question, what do they know, what can be presupposed, etc. Generally, an "explanation qualifies as such relative to a standard, which is generally set by the presumed knowledge and intellectual ability of the intended audience" (Hyman 2015, 136). If you do not know that clouds are made up of water droplets, then the reason I provide for your question why it has started to rain better take this into account and not simply presuppose it. Third, explanation is a *factive* notion. As Strawson says, explanation is a relation "that holds between facts or truths" (1985, 109). Falsehoods simply cannot explain. Plausibly, then, explanatory reasons must be facts as well. Putting all of this together, we arrive at the following analysis of explanatory reasons:

[*ER*]: r is an explanatory reason for some phenomenon x iff it can be expressed as a fact within a cooperative answer to a question regarding x .

Again, some specifications are in order. First, for some answer to be 'cooperative' is just for it follow Gricean (1989) maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner. This should mark the pragmatic character of explanations that is often noted (see Alvarez 2010; Hyman 2015). It is a fact that water is H₂O. But this fact, though true, does not plausibly constitute an explanatory reason in the context of the following exchange: 'Why did Ada come late to the meeting?' — 'Because she missed the bus and water is H₂O.' Unless the wider contexts specifies why this fact is relevant to the explanation, that water is H₂O does not constitute an explanatory reason in this exchange.

Second, note that explanatory reasons themselves need merely be *expressible* as facts. This is just because we don't necessarily answer questions very tidily by citing facts and that-clauses. Another way of putting the same point is to say that explanations need not mention facts explicitly in order for them to contain explanatory reasons. All that needs to be the case is that the relevant parts *can* be put in terms of facts (i.e. true propositions). Moreover, note that it will again be a pragmatic question whether 'Because

she missed the bus and water is H₂O' would be analyzed as one conjunctive reason, or two reasons.

§ 2.3 Motivating Reasons

Let's finally turn to *motivating* reasons. While explanatory and normative reasons are largely agreed upon to be facts, much ink has been spilled over the ontology of motivating reasons. Motivating reasons are held to be facts (Alvarez 2010), states of affairs (Dancy 2000), propositions (Singh 2019), or belief-desire pairs (Davidson 1963). Their exact ontology has important implications. If motivating reasons are facts, then one cannot act for a reason one is mistaken about (Alvarez 2010; Hyman 2015). If motivating reasons are merely propositions, however, then the truth of the proposition is irrelevant for its being a motivating reason (Miller 2008; Singh 2019). Finally, if motivating reasons are mental states, then explanations of actions in terms of the agent's reasons necessarily predicate over their beliefs and desires (Davidson 1963; Smith 1994).

Despite this controversy regarding their ontology, philosophers tend to agree that we can *explain* agents' actions by citing their motivating reason for so acting.⁶ Davidson, for instance, holds that a "reason explains the action by giving the agent's reason for doing what [they] did" (1963, 685). The idea is that the primarily relevant explanatory reason for an intentional action is precisely the reason that motivated to agent to perform it. Smith (1994, 95) doubles down on this idea, saying that "there is an *a priori* connection between citing an agent's reasons for acting in a certain way and making her acting in that way intelligible." In a similar vein, Alvarez notes that "a reason that plays a motivating role for a particular action can (arguably) always play an explanatory role for that action" (2010, 35). Whatever Ada's actual reason was for bringing an umbrella, the idea goes, this reason is plausibly exceptionally well-suited to explain *why* she did this.

So, whatever reason motivated an agent to ϕ can also be cited as a reason that explains their ϕ ing. Note that this idea cuts across the disputes over motivating reasons' exact ontology. If Ada's motivating reason was the fact that it is raining, then this fact can *prima facie* be cited as an explanatory reason for Ada's taking the umbrella. 'Why did

⁶ See Davidson (1963, 685), Raz (1975, 15-17), Smith (1994, 96), Dancy (2000, 101; 131), Darwall (2006, Chapter 1, footnote 3), Schroeder (2007, 14), Setiya (2007, 23), Miller (2008, 224), Alvarez (2010, 170), Locke (2015), Hyman (2015, 137), Alvarez (2017, §3), Mantel (2018, 15), Radcliffe (2020). Cf. Sandis (2013).

Ada bring an umbrella?’ — ‘Because it was raining.’ The same can be said if Ada’s motivating reason was her belief that it is raining together with her desire to remain dry on her way to work. ‘Why did Ada bring an umbrella?’ — ‘Because she wanted to stay dry on her way to work.’ Here, we simply implicate the relevant belief (Davidson 1963, 688). So whatever ontology of motivating reasons we assume, we can make sense of the idea that motivating reasons can be cited as explanatory reasons for agents’ actions in the aforementioned sense. That is, motivating reasons can generally figure in cooperative answers to ‘Why?’-questions, and this is *prima facie* compatible with any of the above ontologies.

Given these considerations, let’s preliminarily define the concepts of a motivating reason and reason explanations. Reason explanations are explanations of actions that cite the agent’s motivating reason as the *explanans* (see Alvarez 2010, 170). Accordingly, this should be our preliminary definition of a *reason explanation*:

[REx]: r is the *explanans* for A ’s ϕ ing iff r was A ’s motivating reason for ϕ ing

Given this, we know that motivating reasons do not just *motivate* actions, they also *explain* them. The concept of a motivating reason thus fulfills at least two functions — it picks out whatever reason motivated the agent to ϕ , and it refers to the *explanans* in reason explanations:

[MR]: r is A ’s motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
 (i) r *motivates* A to ϕ , and
 (ii) r *reason-explains* A ’s ϕ ing

Condition (ii) is not just widely assumed in the current literature, it is also quite plausible. It just seems confused to think that something could be Ada’s reason for bringing the umbrella without also explaining her action. Although a host of facts can answer ‘Why?’-questions pertaining to Ada’s action, it would be very odd indeed if her actual motivating reasons weren’t among them. It is simply part of the role of a motivating reason to allow us to explain agents’ actions.

Notice that (i) is non-committal regarding the exact meaning of ‘motivates’. Humeans would typically think of motivation in *causal* terms (Davidson 1963; Smith 1994; Finlay 2007). Others would rather argue that motivating reasons ‘motivate’ in the sense that they *guide* actions (Dancy 2000; Alvarez 2010; Singh 2019). I will extensively

talk about this dispute in the next chapter (§3). For now, all we need to note is that (i) is a *prima facie* plausible condition for something to be one's motivating reason for ϕ ing.

One may think that (i) is redundant — but it is not. That some p explains Ada's bringing an umbrella is insufficient for p to be Ada's motivating reason. To see this consider the following case.

[*Anti-vegan*] Phil hates veganism — the very idea of being vegan is truly appalling to him. He also just happens to be allergic to meat.⁷ So although he can still enjoy dairy products, meat is in fact off the menu for him. The restaurant he is currently in has only one dish that does not contain meat. That dish is also the only vegan dish they have. Upon learning that this dish is vegan, Phil can infer that it does not contain meat and that it is thus good to eat for him. He thus orders the vegan dish.

Notice that the fact *that the dish is vegan* can perfectly well explain his ordering it precisely because of the inference it licenses. Since it is the only non-meat dish on the menu, the vegan dish is the only dish Phil can in fact order. Knowing this, *that this dish is vegan* thus provides a good explanation for Phil's ordering it. In other words, it is among the facts we can cooperatively cite in order to answer questions as to why Phil ordered this particular dish.

However, *that this dish is vegan* cannot plausibly explain Phil's ordering it *as his reason* for doing so. After all, Phil hates veganism and he would never order something *because* it is vegan. That this dish is vegan, in other words, could never plausibly be the reason that actually motivated Phil to order it — he would never act for *that* reason. So although the dish's being vegan can explain Phil's ordering it in this specific context, it cannot explain his ordering it *as his motivating reason*.

This is why we need (i) as a necessary condition. The general problem is that a multitude of facts can explain our actions while failing to plausibly constitute the reason that motivated us to so act. What we thus need is a condition that fixes the relevant sense in which that reason must have motivated us in order to constitute our motivating reason. This is precisely what (i) is for. So, far from being redundant, (i) is necessary in order to single out the reasons that are indeed relevant for the explanation of our actions in terms of *our* motivating reasons for so acting.

⁷ Meat allergy is a thing. It is called Alpha-gal syndrome (AGS) and is potentially life threatening. So Phil does indeed have *very* good reason to refrain from eating meat.

As I show in the following chapters, [MR] nicely maps the state of the debate about motivating reasons. It shows that any account of motivating reasons must capture (i) what it means for some reason to *motivate* action, and (ii) what it means for that same reason to *explain* that action. As I'll argue at the end of the next chapter, these two questions are distinct. That is, an answer to (i) may *dovetail* with an answer to (ii), but it does not *necessitate* one. We should thus discuss these issues separately. The next chapter is concerned with the relevant meaning of 'motivation' that Humeans and factualists assign to reasons (§3), and the chapter after discusses their respective accounts of reason explanations (§4).

§3 HOW MOTIVATING REASONS MOTIVATE

Three types of approaches to motivating reasons currently dominate the literature.⁸ In brief, *Humeans* argue that motivating reasons are constituted by our motivating mental states: belief-desire pairs (Davidson 1963; Smith 1994).⁹ *Factualists*, on the other hand, argue that motivating reasons are what these states are directed at: facts (Alvarez 2010; Hyman 2015). Finally, *non-factualists* argue that motivating reasons need not be facts — they could also be *false* propositions (Miller 2008; Singh 2019), or merely *possible* states of affairs (Collins 1997; Dancy 2000; Glock 2019). Although there are interesting differences between factualist and non-factualist positions, I will primarily refer to factualist positions for ease of reference. Since they present the same types of arguments, any argument for or against factualist positions will apply *mutatis mutandis* to non-factualist positions.

This chapter is dedicated to laying out the arguments for the Humean (§3.1) and the factualist/non-factualist positions (§3.2) respectively. In line with [MR], I propose that their dispute is best understood in terms of what it means for reasons to ‘motivate’ agents. Humeans typically hold that ‘motivation’ is to be understood in *causal* terms. As factualists argue, however, this seems to be in tension with motivating reasons’ first-personal relevance. From the agent’s point of view, they hold, one’s motivating reasons are the considerations that *guide* one’s action. Hence, they argue that the relevant sense in which motivating reasons ‘motivate’ agents is by *guiding* their actions. I conclude this chapter by briefly showing that motivating reasons’ motivating function really is separately analyzable from their explanatory function. As such, how motivating reasons explain actions is a further question, and not necessarily one that is simply implied by one’s account of how they motivate actions.

§ 3.1 Humeanism

Humeanism concerning motivating reasons typically starts from a Humean conception of the basic constituents of our minds, inferring what motivating reasons must be from there.

⁸ However, compare Hieronymi (2011), Ford (2017), and Schmidt and Glock (2021) for interestingly different approaches to motivating reasons.

⁹ See also Bishop (1989), Enç (2003), Wallace (2003), Pryor (2007), Turri (2009), and Radcliffe (2020).

According to Humeans, our mental life is constituted by two types of mental states. Beliefs, or cognitive states more generally, constitute our descriptive representations of our environment. Desires, or conative states, make up our goal-directed states.¹⁰ As such, beliefs aim to fit the world, while desires aim at the world fitting them. Their respective direction of fit is best expressed via counterfactuals: if I believed that p , and perceived that not- p , then I would drop the belief that p . However, if I desired that p , and perceived that not- p , I would not drop this desire – rather, I would be disposed to act such as to realize it (Smith 1994, 115). Beliefs and desires are thus functionally defined via their dispositional properties.

Importantly, both states are necessary for the motivation of action because each alone is motivationally inert.¹¹ Beliefs merely tell us what the world is like and how to achieve the things we want, but they do not indicate *what* it is that we want – only desires do that. But merely desiring something is insufficient for action since desires do not provide us with any idea of how to achieve it – only beliefs provide that kind of information.¹² A motivating state is thus complete only if both a (functionally defined) desire *and* a (functionally defined) belief is present. Together, and only together, do such mental states constitute the agent's *motivating states*.

Plausibly, motivating reasons are the things that motivate action. Or, as Millgram (1997, 4-5) aptly puts it: “How could anything be a motivating reason for action if it could not motivate you to actually *do* something?” Now, as we have just seen, motivating states (i.e. belief-desire pairs) motivate action. Since motivating states motivate us, and our concept of a motivating reason is held to pick out whatever it is that motivates us, it is natural to infer that motivating reasons just *are* our motivating states: belief-desire pairs. So there is a natural progression from motivating states to motivating reasons via their motivational function that the Humean can exploit.

¹⁰ I will use desires here broadly to indicate pro-attitudes more generally. See Davidson (1963), Smith (1987, 1994), Sinhababu (2017), Howard (2021), but compare Schueler (1995).

¹¹ See Smith (1994, Chapter 4) and Schroeder (2007, Chapter 1.2).

¹² Now, as Smith (1994, 115) notes, desires themselves might incorporate some belief-like elements. However, the basic point remains: states of both directions of fit need to be present in order for action to ensue. Note that this does not entail that Humeans are committed to the view that desires themselves are the motivating states. Humeans are merely committed to the negative claim that each state alone, functionally defined, cannot motivate action. See Schroeder (2007, Chapter 1.2), and Davis (2005), but compare Radcliffe (2020).

To appreciate the virtues of this line of argument for a Humean account of motivating reasons, briefly consider a prominent alternative. This argument is based on Smith's (1987) influential rendition of it, and is excellently summarized by Pettit (1987, 530–531):

having a motivating reason to ϕ is [*inter alia*] having a goal: say, the goal that p ; that having such a goal is being disposed to bring it about that p , where that disposition is naturally capable of surviving the perception that not p ; and that being so disposed is desiring that p .

The problem with this argument is that it is insufficient to establish the claim that motivating reasons *are* mental states. The argument says that *having* a motivating reason is, among other things, desiring. However, this does not yet show that motivating reasons *are* mental states. It merely tells us what it means to *have* a motivating reason, not what it means to *be* one. This argument is thus compatible with the idea that motivating reasons are facts, and that our having such a fact as a motivating reason for ϕ ing requires a desire to ϕ . This is, in effect, precisely Alvarez's point when she says that:

some things are motivating reasons only for those agents who want certain things, that is, for those agents who have certain goals. Nonetheless, this does not make the goals those agents have the *reasons* that motivate them to act. (Alvarez 2009b, 212)

The Humean claim is stronger than this. Humeans argue that desires are *part of* the agent's motivating reason rather than just a precondition for their having that reason. The Humean claim is not just that motivating reasons are enabled by the agent's desires, it is that they are partly *constituted* by them. This is precisely what my argument above yields.

Humeanism thus holds that an agent's motivating reason for ϕ ing consists in their motivating states, where their motivating states are belief-desire pairs. Their argument for this is as simple as it is compelling. Belief-desire pairs constitute our motivating states. Since the concept of a motivating reason aims to pick out whatever motivates action, Humeans infer that they pick out our motivating states. Hence, they conclude, motivating reasons *are* belief-desire pairs. The argument thus identifies motivating reasons with belief-desire pairs via the essential feature they have in common: their capacity to

motivate agents. Given this, here is a reconstruction of a simple argument for Humeanism about motivating reasons:¹³

- [*psyche*]
- (i) Belief-desire pairs are our motivating states.
 - (ii) Motivating states, and only motivating states, motivate agents.
 - (iii) Motivating reasons motivate agents.
-
- (C) Hence, belief-desire pairs are motivating reasons

Typically, Humeans further hold that belief-desire pairs motivate in the sense that they *cause* action. Davidson (1963), for instance, prominently argued that “the relation between a reason and an action when the reason explains the action by giving the agent's reason for doing what he did” is a causal one (1963, 685). Finlay (2007, 221) likewise concurs that the “[m]otivation of action is a causal process.” So, since motivating states *cause* actions, Humeans typically hold that the sense in which motivating reasons ‘motivate’ actions is that they *cause* them:

- [*causal*]
- (i) Belief-desire pairs are our motivating states.
 - (ii) Motivating states are our motivating reasons.
 - (iii) Motivating states, and only motivating states, *cause* actions.
-
- (C) Hence, motivating reasons *cause* actions.

Again, the argument is simple and follows more or less directly from a Humean account of the mind. Humeans first identify motivating reasons with belief-desire pairs *via* their capacity to motivate actions. Since belief-desire pairs motivate action in the sense that they cause them, motivating reasons must cause actions as well. Motivating reasons thus motivate action in the sense that they *cause* them.¹⁴ Humeans would thus adjust our preliminary definition of motivating reasons as follows:

- [*MR_H*]: *r* is A's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
- (i) *r* (non-deviantly) *causes* A to ϕ , and
 - (ii) *r* *reason-explains* A's ϕ ing

¹³ See Miller (2008) for a similar reconstruction.

¹⁴ The relevant causal relation must, of course, be non-deviant. See Dretske (1988) and Mantel (2018) for solutions to the problem of deviant causal chains.

§ 3.2 Factualism & Non-Factualism

As we have seen, one important argument for Humeanism stems from the Humean theory of motivation. Similarly, factualist and non-factualist accounts offer an account of what it means for motivating reasons to ‘motivate’ action. They argue that motivating reasons ‘motivate’ in the sense that they *guide* our actions.¹⁵ Motivating reasons guide action, in turn, by constituting *premises* in our practical deliberation; premises *in the light of* which we subsequently act.

To see what this is supposed to mean, start with the central motivation behind the idea that motivating reasons ‘motivate’ action in the sense of *guiding* (rather than *causing*) it. Alvarez summarizes this point excellently when she says that:

A reason that motivates [...] presents a course of action *to the agent as something right or good* so that the agent acts *in the light of* that reason. [...] It] seems implausible that what is desired could be a motivating reason because what is desired is neither something that makes acting right, nor something in the light of which one acts. (Alvarez 2010, 92; emphases mine)

Alvarez talks about the object of desire here, but the same argument is also employed against mental states as such. What it means for motivating reasons to ‘motivate’ agents to ϕ is for them to seem to the agent to *favor* ϕ ing, and for the agent to ϕ *in the light of* them.¹⁶ This claim is supported by two points regarding what it is like to act for motivating reasons.

The first point purports to be about what it is like to consider our reasons *prior to* acting “from the perspective of first-person deliberation” (Miller 2008, 225). In practical deliberation, we consider what seem to us to be the facts that favor ϕ ing (Raz 1975; Alvarez 2010). Now, factualists hold that our motivating reasons can constitute premises in practical deliberation.¹⁷ The fact that it is raining may thus both favor my bringing an umbrella and be my motivating reason for doing so. So, in deliberating practically,

¹⁵ See Miller (2008, 225), Alvarez (2010, 120), Hyman (2015, 168), Dancy (2018, 10), Singh (2019, 409), and Schlicht & Starzak (2023, 6).

¹⁶ See also McDowell (1982, 302), Dancy (2000, 9), Schroeder (2007, 14), Miller (2008, 224), Alvarez (2010, 131), Dancy (2014, 85), Heuer (2014, 292), Locke (2015, 221), Dancy (2018, 10), Singh (2019), and Schmidt and Glock (2019, 126) among others. Cf. Müller (2023).

¹⁷ See Dancy (2000, 10), Miller (2008, 228), Alvarez (2010, 5), Dancy (2014, 85), Heuer (2014, 292), Dancy (2018), and Singh (2019) among others.

considering motivating reasons must be indistinguishable from considering facts. Hence, considering our motivating reasons must be just like considering (putative) facts that favor ϕ ing.

It is *putative* facts because we may reason with falsehoods without recognizing that we do. Factualists hold that only true propositions are motivating reasons, otherwise they are mere *apparent* reasons (Alvarez 2010; Hyman 2015). Non-factualists do not make this distinction and thus also call false propositions or non-obtaining states of affairs motivating reasons proper (Dancy 2000; Miller 2008; Singh 2019). As this distinction plays no role for my arguments at this point, I will ignore this nuance for the time being and continue talking of reasons as *facts* (cf. §5.1).

This naturally creates problems for the Humean account of motivating reasons as belief-desire pairs. In thinking about what to do, it does not seem to us as if we consider our own mental states. Rather, we think about the relevant considerations pertaining to our situation. In her deliberations, Ada may think about the fact that it is raining, how long it will take her to get to her office, which jacket to wear in light of the rain, and about the protection an umbrella may afford her. Importantly, however, Ada does *not* think about her beliefs concerning these matters – she thinks about these matters directly. The direct object of Ada’s thought is the fact *that it is raining*, not *her belief* that this is so. Neither does Ada think about her desires, wants, or goals – the desire of getting to work while remaining dry is the starting point of her deliberative process, rather than a premise within it (Anscombe 1957, 63; Alvarez 2010, 96). So since motivating reasons can constitute the object of our thought in practical deliberation, and our own mental states virtually never figure explicitly in our reasoning processes, motivating reasons are only implausibly constituted by our own mental states.

Secondly, motivating reasons are also the reasons *in the light of which* we act.¹⁸ This phrase is metaphorical and I problematize it later on (§6.2). For now, the intuitive idea is that once we’ve settled on the facts that favor ϕ ing from our perspective, these facts are those “in view of which” we act (Hyman 2015, 168). As we act, that is, we are guided by and think about these facts that we settled to speak in favor of ϕ ing. Again, we only implausibly act in the light of our own mental states since our mental states do not seem to us to be what we think about while acting. Together, these two points about

¹⁸ See Dancy (2000, 6), Miller (2008, 224), Alvarez (2010, 36), Locke (2015, 221), Hyman (2015, 157), Singh (2019, 409), Cunningham (2021, 1570), Starzak and Schlicht (2023, 17).

considering one's motivating reasons *prior to* and *in* acting constitute (what I call) the *Argument from Guidance*:

- [*guidance*] (i) r motivates A 's ϕ ing as their reason iff
 [*Favor*] ... r seems to A to favor ϕ ing, and
 [*Light*] ... A ϕ s in the light of r .
- (ii) Only (putative) facts can seem to one to favor ϕ ing.
 (iii) One can only ϕ in the light of (putative) facts.
-
- (C) So, only (putative) facts can motivate A 's ϕ ing as their reason.

To be 'motivated' by a reason thus means for that reason to *guide* one's action both *prior to* and *in* acting.¹⁹ The motivation behind this argument is phenomenological, in line with Ford's (2017) point about the representation of action from the point of view of the agent. *Qua* agents, factualists hold, it seems to us as if we consider facts in considering our motivating reasons (ii) *prior to* and (iii) *in* acting. In holding that motivating reasons are mental states, Humeans thus seemingly fail to account for what it is like for us, first-personally, to think about our reasons *prior to* and *in* acting. It does not seem to us that we consider our own mental states in thinking about what to do, factualists argue, and neither do we take ourselves to act in the light of them. As such, the Humean account "isn't true to the phenomenology of such cases" (Singh 2019, 418).²⁰ As such, we should at least be very suspicious of the Humean claim that motivating reasons are mental states. The strength of the factualist position, in turn, lies precisely in the fact that it can easily account for the phenomenology of considering our reasons. Motivating reasons seem to us to be facts because they just *are*.

According to factualists, then, motivating reasons 'motivate' action in the sense that they guide action. What guides actions are the facts our mental states are directed at, rather than these states themselves. Accordingly, factualists deny that the relevant sense of 'motivation' at stake is the *same* sense in which our motivating mental states are often held to motivate action. For ease of reference, consider the Humean argument again:

¹⁹ See, for instance, Raz (1975, 16), Alvarez (2010, 27), Hyman (2011, 361), Dancy (2014, 85).

²⁰ See also Miller (2008, 225), Hyman (2015, 168), Dancy (2018, 10), Singh (2019, 409), and Schlicht & Starzak (2023, 6).

- [*psyche*]
- (i) Belief-desire pairs are our motivating states.
 - (ii) Motivating states, and only motivating states, motivate agents.
 - (iii) Motivating reasons motivate agents.
-
- (C1) Hence, belief-desire pairs are motivating reasons.

What factualists thus dispute is premise (ii). One way of putting their point is this: (ii) is ambivalent between two senses of ‘motivate’. Granted, our motivating *states* may ‘motivate’ action in the sense that they cause them. Yet, motivating *reasons* motivate action in a different sense — motivating reasons ‘motivate’ in the sense that they *guide* agents’ actions. That is, motivating reasons ‘motivate’ action in the sense that agents consider them to favor their so acting prior to acting, and that agents subsequently act in light of those reasons. Hence, the argument does not succeed. It suffers from an equivocation between two senses of motivation, only one of which is really relevant for motivating reasons, as opposed to motivating mental states: the *guidance* sense of motivation. Factualists and non-factualist would thus adjust our preliminary definition of motivating reasons as follows:

- [*MR_F*]: *r* is *A*’s motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
- (i) *r* *guides* *A*’s ϕ ing, and
 - (ii) *r* *reason-explains* *A*’s ϕ ing

To summarize, factualists and non-factualists argue that motivating reasons are constituted by the objects of our mental states, rather than by these states themselves. In other words, Ada’s reason for bringing an umbrella was *that it is raining*, rather than her desire to remain dry and her belief that bringing an umbrella would achieve this. The motivation for this claim stems from first-personal considerations regarding what it is like for us as agents to consider our reasons *prior to* and *in* acting. In neither circumstance does it seem to us as if we were considering our mental states. Rather, we are motivated by what we take to favor our acting in a certain way. As such, our motivating reasons are those considerations we take to favor our acting in that way, and in the light of which we subsequently act. What we take to favor ϕ ing, in turn, are facts, propositions, or states of affairs, but not mental states. Factualists thus claim to live up to Ford’s (2017, 223) methodological demand: the “representation that is ‘of’ action in the subjective sense that

it is characteristic of someone who is performing an action” is best explicated by theorizing motivating reasons as facts.

Let me close this section by showing that motivating reasons’ *explanatory* function can be theorized independently of their *motivational* function. As we’ve said from the outset, motivating reasons are typically taken to be capable of *explaining* our actions. However, this does not necessarily mean that motivating reasons must constitute the *entire explanans* in reason explanations. It is conceptually possible that facts motivate (i.e. *guide*) our actions, while only the mental states (i.e. belief-desire pairs) within which they are embedded fully explain those actions. So the factualist arguments regarding motivating reasons’ *motivational* function notwithstanding, it is still possible that Humeans provide the correct account of what it means to *explain* action *via* those reasons. Alvarez, for instance, notes that:

for Davidson, the combination of the mental states is an *explanatory* reason because it explains the occurrence of the action; and the contents of those mental states are the agent’s *motivating* reason: They guide the agent in acting through her practical reasoning. (Alvarez 2022, 192).

It is disputable whether this is the most accurate reading of Davidson (1963). The point is just that even if factualists were right in their criticism of Humean belief-desire accounts of motivating reasons, it is still possible that Humeans have the correct account of what it means to *explain* action in terms of reasons. This would mean that in reason explanations, the *explanans* is not strictly speaking *just* the agent’s motivating reason. Rather, the *explanans* is still the belief-desire pair within which the motivating reason is embedded.

This is, in effect, Dretske’s (2009) view. As he notes in a footnote, referring to Dancy (2000) at the end: “I speak here of reasons causing actions. It would be better to speak of the mental states (belief, fear, desire, etc.) whose content constitutes our reasons as the cause” (Dretske 2009, 21 fn1). While motivating reasons may be the content of our mental states, rather than these states themselves, it is still the mental states that cause, and thus explain, the action. As such, a successful explanation of action in terms of the agent’s reasons will still have to refer to the causally efficacious belief-desire pair in order to fully explain the action. This is the resulting Dretskean account of motivating reasons:

- [**MR_D**]: r is A 's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
- (i) r *guides* A 's ϕ ing, and
 - (ii) r is embedded in a belief-desire pair that *reason-explains* A 's ϕ ing

The point is this: even if factualists were right regarding their analysis of motivating reasons' *motivational* function, whether or not they have the correct account of reason explanations is a *separate* question. Accordingly, let's consider the idea that mental states constitute the full *explanans* in the explanation of action, as well as the factualist arguments against this idea.

§4 REASON EXPLANATIONS

Let's now turn to the question regarding "the kind of representation that is 'of' action in the objective sense that it is characteristic of someone who is *thinking about action*" (Ford 2017, 223; my emphasis). In more colloquial terms: what does it take to *explain* an action from the perspective of the observer? Both Humeans and factualists agree that reason explanations somehow involve the agent's mental states, that is, their perspective on the situation. After all, reason explanations should reveal what "the agent saw, or thought [they] saw, in [their] action" (Davidson 1963, 685). Dancy similarly holds that the very aim "of the explanation of action is to give, so far as possible, the agent's own *perspective* on things, so as to reveal the light in which the action was done" (Dancy 2000, 108; emphasis mine). As such, an account of how reason explanations *explain* action will have to involve the agent's perspective in some way.

We are thus faced with the following question: is my perspective part of the *explanans*, or is it a mere precondition for it without having any explanatory import itself? Following Dancy (2000, 108) and Collins (1997), we may gloss 'the agent's perspective' as their cognitive and conative attitudes relating to a given action-situation. My perspective as related to my leaving the house involves, among other things, my belief that it is raining, my intention to go outside, and my desire to remain dry, say.

Understood in this way, we again find two broad types of answers. Humeans argue that reason explanations *constitutively* involve the agent's perspective (§4.1). On this view, some causally efficacious belief-desire pair constitutes the agent's motivating reason for ϕ ing, which in turn constitutes the full *explanans* in reason explanations.²¹ So reason explanations are just *rationalizations* in Davidson's (1963) sense. Factualists and non-factualists, on the other hand, argue that one's beliefs and desires are mere "enabling conditions" (Dancy 2000, 127) for successful reason explanations – the agent's perspective itself is explanatorily idle (§4.2). The explanatory work is done entirely by the facts that guide our actions.²² The motivating reason for which I brought the umbrella

²¹ See Davidson (1963), Bishop (1989), Smith (1994), Enç (2003), Wallace (2003), Pryor (2007), Turri (2009), and Radcliffe (2020).

²² See Raz (1975), Collins (1997), Scanlon (1998), Dancy (2000), Bittner (2001), Raz (2009), Alvarez (2010), Hyman (2015), and Singh (2019). Note that Singh (2019) is officially only concerned with motivating reasons. But since we use an agent's motivating reason to explain their action, the extension of his account to at least some explanatory reasons comes quite naturally.

was that it was raining, so *explanans* for why I brought the umbrella is also just *that it was raining* – no need to include my perspective in the reason explanation. This section is dedicated to laying out the respective arguments for both positions.

§ 4.1 Humean Rationalizations

There are two lines of argument Humeans typically cite in favor of the idea that motivating reasons as belief-desire pairs constitute the *explanans* in reason explanations. The first is a rather straightforward implication of a causal account of action that Humeans typically endorse:

- [*causal**]
- (i) Reason explanations are causal explanations.
 - (ii) Belief-desire pairs cause actions.
-
- (C) Hence, reason explanations are belief-desire explanations.

In that sense, reason explanations are simply *rationalizations* (Davidson 1963) — they are a type of causal explanation that cites the agent’s causally efficacious mental states in explaining their action in terms of their reasons. If motivating reasons *are* belief-desire pairs, then the *explanans* in reason explanations will be the agent’s motivating reason. If motivating reasons are the *contents* of belief-desire pairs (as the Dretskean view holds), then the *explanans* in reason explanations are those mental states that *incorporate* the agent’s motivating reasons, i.e. the reasons that guided their action. In any case, the general point is still that the full *explanans* of a reason explanation consists in the agent’s mental states, and not *just* their contents. This is because the mental states are ultimately what causes the action.

Humeans further substantiate this through a second argument. As Smith argues, for instance, the very fact that motivating reasons can explain actions supports their psychological reality:

Given that an agent who has a motivating reason to ϕ is in a state that is in this way potentially explanatory of her ϕ -ing, it is then natural to suppose that her motivating reason is itself *psychologically real*. (Smith 1994, 96)

The idea is roughly this. We plausibly cannot fully explain an action in terms of the agent’s reasons without understanding the agent’s perspective on the situation. Consider

Ada again. If we cannot suppose that Ada believed that it was raining, her taking the umbrella will be quite mysterious. Moreover, if we cannot suppose that Ada wanted to stay dry on her way to work, her bringing the umbrella will be similarly unintelligible. To resolve these mysteries, we would need some story involving her beliefs and goals in bringing the umbrella. So in explaining Ada's action in terms of Ada's reasons, these two psychological assumptions must somehow be included in the explanation for it to *fully* explain Ada's action. So if we make actions intelligible by way of the agent's reason for so acting, this explanation must involve the agent's perspective, i.e. their beliefs and desires. Since the *explanans* by itself must be sufficient to constitute the full explanation, this implies that the full *explanans* in reason explanations must involve the agent's perspective. We thus arrive at the following argument:

- [*perspective*] (i) Reason explanations involve A's reason r for ϕ ing
(ii) If A ϕ 's for reason r , then r can explain A's ϕ ing
(iii) If r can explain A's action, then r is manifested in A's perspective

(C) Hence, reason explanations involve A's perspective

So while [*causal*] builds upon a Humean causal theory of motivation, [*perspective*] proceeds from an idea of what it means to make actions intelligible. As already discussed, (i) and (ii) should be quite uncontroversial. That is, (i) merely expresses the idea that reason explanations consist in the agent's motivating reason, and (ii) holds that motivating reasons are generally apt to explain actions.

Given the above considerations, (iii) should be similarly plausible. Citing reasons that are not in any way related to the agent's beliefs and desires to explain their action *in terms of the agent's reasons* is not just unintelligible, it is impossible. The fact that it is raining simply *cannot* explain Ada's bringing an umbrella if she did not at least believe that it is raining. Relatedly, in order for us to *understand* an action and its explanation, we must have some idea of the agent's perspective. In other words, in order for the action to be truly intelligible, we must have some grasp on what the agent believed and wanted. Ada's bringing an umbrella is intelligible only if she wanted to remain dry — had she desired to take a stroll in the summer rain, then her believing that it is raining would not explain her bringing an umbrella. Since naming the explanans can be sufficient to explain

an action, this implies that the agent's perspective must already be captured within the explanans. Either way, reason explanations must involve the agent's perspective:

[RE_H]: r is the explanans for A 's ϕ ing iff r involves A 's perspective

§ 4.2 Reason Explanations and Enabling Conditions

Factualists and non-factualists both deny the Humean contention that reason explanations *constitutively* involve the agent's perspective as part of the *explanans* proper. Rather, they argue, our perspective is a mere *enabling condition* for our actual motivating reason to explain our action.

To substantiate this claim, factualists typically start with the idea that it seems to be possible to explain actions simply by reference to considerations agents took to favor their so acting. Dancy (2000, 128) calls this a *normative explanation* of an action. We may thus explain Ada's bringing her umbrella simply by referring to the fact she took to favor her doing so: *that it was raining*. No need to point out that she believed this, no need to point towards some desire of hers. Factualists argue that we should take this point at face value: the agent's perspective is not necessarily part of the *explanans* in reason explanations — it is a mere enabling condition for their actual motivating reason, namely *that p* , to explain their action. Of course we must presuppose that she believed that p and desired to ψ . The point is just that presuppositions need not necessarily make up the *explanans* itself. As such, it is possible to provide an explanation of Ada's action simply by citing the fact Ada acted upon.

Here's another way of making the same point. Recall our earlier definition of explanatory reasons:

[ER]: r is an explanatory reason for some phenomenon x iff it can be expressed as a fact within a cooperative answer to a question regarding x .

What the factualist points toward is that simply citing the fact *that it is raining* can constitute a cooperative answer to the question why Ada brought her umbrella. This fact constitutes a cooperative answer precisely because we may presume that Ada believes that it is raining, and that she wants to remain dry on her way to work. As such, her mental states are mere presuppositions — or enabling conditions — for the explanation of

her action. Ada's motivating reason (i.e. *that it is raining*) itself constitutes the full *explanans* of her action.

Notice that this is in principle compatible with an event-causal account of action. Metaphysically, that is, it may still be true that actions are partly constituted by their causal antecedents, i.e. belief-desire pairs. The point is that the explanation of action may succeed without directly involving these mental states within the *explanans*. Compare: metaphysically, the match's being dry is partly constitutive of its catching fire. Still, we can perfectly cooperatively explain why it was lit without this fact plausibly constituting part of the full *explanans*.

Accordingly, Dancy (2000, 127) argues that we need to differentiate between considerations that *explain* and those that *enable* explanation. That Venice has not yet sunk, for instance, does not explain why I am strolling through Venice. Rather, it is a precondition – or *enabling* condition – for an explanation of my meandering through Venice to be successful (see Dancy 2000, 127). Similarly, that I have been caught is not the relevant explanation as to why I am currently in prison — that I have robbed a bank is what explains this (see Dancy 2000, 136). Having been caught is merely what enables the robbery to explain my being in prison. In both cases, then, we must differentiate between the *explanans* (i.e. the consideration that actually constitutes a cooperative answer to the relevant question), and the consideration that merely enables the *explanans* to do its work.

Factualists claim that the same is true of agents' cognitive and conative states. That Ada believed that it was raining merely enables the fact *that it was raining* to explain her action as her reason. While it is necessary that Ada did in fact believe that it was raining in order for the rain to explain her bringing the umbrella, Ada's *believing* it “does not contribute directly to the explanation” of her action (Dancy 2000, 127). One's mental states are not part of the *explanans* for why one performed a given action. All one's mental states do is enable the facts that actually constitute one's motivating reasons to explain one's action. In other words, one's beliefs and desires do not constitute the *explanans* in reason explanations, they are mere preconditions for one's actual motivating reasons to explain.

Dancy thus suggests to read such references to mental states *appositionally*. That is, when we say ‘A ϕ ed because they believed that *p*’, what this really means is that ‘A ϕ ed because *p*, as they believed’. So, rather than figuring in the *explanans* itself, the

belief is “a comment on [it]” (Dancy 2000, 129). Certainly, if we could not add this comment, the reason explanation would not go through. Had Ada not believed that it was raining, we could not cite the fact that it was raining in order to explain her bringing the umbrella. But again, although the Ada’s believing this is necessary in order for her motivating reason to properly explain her action, it is not part of the *explanans* itself. Mental states are not constitutive of the explanans in reason explanations.

To make this point more carefully, recall the Humean argument for the indispensability of the agent’s perspective in reason explanations:

- [*perspective*] (i) Reason explanations involve *A*’s reason *r* for ϕ ing
(ii) If *A* ϕ ’s for reason *r*, then *r* can explain *A*’s ϕ ing
(iii) If *r* can explain *A*’s action, then *r* is manifested in *A*’s perspective

(C) Hence, reason explanations involve *A*’s perspective

Factualists in effect counter this argument by conceding all of the premises, while resisting the precise conclusion Humeans draw from this. Just like they pointed towards an ambiguity in the sense in which reasons ‘motivate’ actions, factualists now indicate an ambiguity in the sense in which reason explanations ‘involve’ the agent’s perspective. Of course an agent can only act for a reason they somehow have cognitively available. However, this does not mean that the cognitive availability of that reason plays any genuinely explanatory role. In other words, reason explanations may also involve the agent’s perspective in the form of an explanatorily idle presupposition (or enabling condition). So Humeans must mean that reason explanations *constitutively* involve the agent’s perspective:

- [*perspective**] (i) Reason explanations involve *A*’s reason *r* for ϕ ing
(ii) If *A* ϕ ’s for reason *r*, then *r* can explain *A*’s ϕ ing
(iii) If *r* can explain *A*’s action, then *r* is manifested in *A*’s perspective

(C) Hence, reason explanations *constitutively* involve *A*’s perspective

It is this claim regarding the *constitutive* role of the agent’s perspective in reason explanations that factualists want to resist. Factualists do not deny that there must be *some* cognitive relation between the agent and their motivating reason *r* — the question is just whether this belief is constitutive of the *explanans* itself. Factualists agree, that is,

that the reasons for which agents act must be available to them. Hence, Ada's reason must somehow figure in her mental life. Or as Dancy says, "[w]henever the agent acts in the light of the fact that p , the agent must take it that p " (2000, 126). What factualists deny is that the beliefs and desires of the agent constitute part of the *explanans* — mental states merely *enable* reason explanations (Dancy 2000; Alvarez 2018). Let's thus reformulate [*perspective*] accordingly:

- [*enabling*]
- (i) Reason explanations involve A 's reason r for ϕ ing
 - (ii) If A ϕ 's for reason r , then r can explain A 's ϕ ing
 - (iii) If r can explain A 's action, then r is manifested in A 's perspective
-
- (C*) Reason explanations involve A 's r for ϕ ing,
as manifested in A 's perspective

So factualists' central problem with [*perspective*] is with the Humean interpretation of the necessity claim in (iii). Premise (iii) says that a reason can explain an agent's action only if that reason is manifested in the agent's perspective. Both Humeans and factualists agree with this. The problem is that this claim is ambiguous. It may mean that the agent's perspective is a proper part of the *explanans*, or it may merely indicate its role as a necessary presupposition for successful explanations. Factualists argue for the latter reading.

In other words, necessary conditions need not be constitutive of the phenomenon under investigation, they may also be mere *enabling* conditions. Venice's remaining afloat is necessary for my walking through it, but it is not constitutive of my walking through it. Similarly, that some reason is manifested in the agent's perspective is necessary for it to explain their action, but this does not mean that the agent's perspective is constitutive of the full explanation — it may just be a mere enabling condition.

So the factualist definition of reason explanations actually does not alter the original form at all. Something constitutes the *explanans* in reason explanations just in case it was the agent's motivating reason for so acting. It is obviously necessary to cite the agent's reason in order to reason-explain their action, but factualists hold that it is also sufficient. There simply is no need to refer to the agent's motivating states in order to fully reason-explain their action:

[*RExF*]: r is the explanans for A 's ϕ ing iff r was A 's motivating reason for ϕ ing

§ 4.3 Taking Stock

Let's take stock of what we have so far. Start with the accounts of motivating reasons we have considered. Humeans hold that motivating reasons are belief-desire pairs. They present two arguments for this. First, [*psyche*] identifies motivating reasons with our motivating states (i.e. belief-desire pairs) *via* an essential feature they share: the power to motivate actions. Second, [*causal*] builds upon this and argues that since the sense in which motivating states motivate is a *causal* one, the sense in which motivating reasons motivate must be causal as well. Thus, Humeans arrive at the following definition of motivating reasons:

- [*MR_H*]: r is A 's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
- (i) r (non-deviantly) *causes* A to ϕ , and
 - (ii) r *reason-explains* A 's ϕ ing

Factualists, on the other hand, hold that motivating reasons are facts. As such, they are not identical to our mental states. Rather, motivating reasons are what these motivating states are directed at, namely, true propositions. Their positive argument for this view at the same time puts pressure on the Humean claim that motivating reasons are our motivating states. That is, [*guidance*] argues that motivating reasons motivate action in the sense that they (i) seem to agents to speak in favor of so acting, and (ii) in that agents subsequently act in the light of these reasons. What seems to be uniquely well-equipped to fulfill these features are facts. Mental states, on the other hand, neither seem to us, first-personally, to favor acting, nor do we plausibly act in the light of our own mental states. This, then, is the factualist definition of motivating reasons:

- [*MR_F*]: r is A 's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
- (i) r *guides* A 's ϕ ing in the sense that
 - [*Favor*] ... r seems to A to favor ϕ ing, and
 - [*Light*] ... A ϕ s in the light of r , and
 - (ii) r *reason-explains* A 's ϕ ing

This lead us to consider a hybrid position, espoused by Dretske (2009). As I have argued, factualists hold that the sense in which motivating *reasons* motivate actions is not the same sense in which motivating *states* may motivate them. While motivating states may *cause* actions, motivating reasons *guide* them. Factualists thus plead that Humeans

equivocate between two senses of motivation in their arguments for the idea that belief-desire pairs constitute our motivating reasons. The compromise is to concede this, but insist that our motivating states still cause and thus explain actions. Motivating reasons may be embedded in those states, that is, but the full explanans in reason explanations is still constituted by our causally efficacious belief-desire pairs. We arrived at this quasi-Humean definition:

- [MR_D]:** r is A 's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
- (i) r guides A 's ϕ ing, and
 - (ii) r is embedded in a belief-desire pair that *reason-explains* A 's ϕ ing

This also showed that the two parts of our analysis of motivating reasons are truly separate — we need *both* an account of what it means for reasons to motivate actions, *and* what it means for them to explain actions. Given this, I have considered the Humean arguments in favor of the idea that the *explanans* in reason explanations still consists in the agent's mental states. Humeans offer two arguments for this. The first argument starts from a causal conception of our motivating mental states. Since motivating reasons are (constituents of) belief-desire pairs, and belief-desire pairs cause action, motivating reasons are (constituents of) an essentially *causal explanans* in reason explanations. Reason explanation is just *rationalization* in Davidson's (1963) sense. It is thus a causal explanation, predicating over the causally relevant mental states. The second argument, [*perspective*], starts from a plausible idea regarding the necessity of understanding the agent's perspective in explaining their action. Reason explanations must somehow involve the agent's beliefs and desires in order for their action to become intelligible to us. Since reason explanations may consist solely of the *explanans*, the agent's perspective must accordingly be part of the *explanans*.

Factualists argue against the Humean claim that our motivating states are *part of* the *explanans*. In explaining an agent's ϕ ing via the fact that p , it is, of course, necessary that we *presuppose* the agent to believe that p and desire to ψ . But this does not imply that the agent's beliefs and desires are *constitutive* of the *explanans* of that action. It seems that a cooperative answer to the question why A ϕ ed may simply cite the fact they acted in the light of, that is, their motivating reason. In effect, factualists thus undermine the strict explanatory function that Humeans attribute to the agent's perspective.

So the argumentative strategy employed by factualists comes down to the following. First, if we really want to take the agent's experience of action seriously, we must model motivating reasons as facts. From the first-personal perspective, it does not seem to us as if we consider our own mental states in considering our reasons. Rather, it seems to us as if we consider the facts we take to favor our ϕ ing. Then factualists provide us with a *prima facie* reasonable account for how motivating reasons can still constitute the *explanans* in reason explanations. Motivating reasons may not be constituted by our mental states, but mental states are no strictly speaking part of the *explanans* in reason explanations — they are mere enabling conditions. Factualists thus promise to both account for actions as they are represented by agents *and* observers of the action — they claim to account for “the unity of these representations” (Ford 2017, 223).

In what follows, I argue that factualists cannot live up to this promise. First, both factualists and non-factualists pervasively run into a notorious problem for their account of reason explanations: *The Problem of Error Cases* (§5). As I argue, Humean accounts of reason explanations can solve this problem satisfactorily. Hence, when it comes to reason explanations, we have good reason to be Humean. Second, I show that factualists have in fact no grounds to point towards a specific phenomenology of considering one's motivating reasons (§6). As such, they cannot base their *guidance* sense of ‘motivation’ on first-personal considerations at all. Additionally, I provide positive arguments for holding that Humeans can actually account for the phenomenology of considering one's own motivating reasons *via* transparency accounts of mental states (§6.3). I thus conclude that if there is a distinct phenomenology to considering one's own reasons that resembles the phenomenology of considering supposed facts, Humeans can account for this as well.

The upshot: factualists simply fail to live up to their promise of offering an account of action that unifies the agent's and the observer's perspectives — their account of the explanation of action from the observer's perspective faces a notoriously pervasive problem, and their account of the first-personal perspective on action in fact does not withstand more thorough scrutiny. Meanwhile, Humeans simply do not face that same problem for the explanation of action and are in fact able to provide an account of the agent's perspective on their motivating reasons. So while both positions might be on a par when it comes to the agent's perspective, Humeans clearly have the upper hand in the explanation of action. We thus have good reason to be Humeans in our theory of motivating reasons.

PART II

REASON EXPLANATIONS & THE AGENT'S PERSPECTIVE

§5 SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF ERROR CASES

To begin, let's consider the factualist's account of reason explanations. Recall that the *explanans* in reason explanation consists in the agent's motivating reason. Factualists hold that motivating reasons are facts. As such, reason explanations involve the fact that motivated the agent to act as the *explanans*. What motivates this view is that we do often seem to provide reason explanations that merely mention what the agent took to favor their so acting. 'Why did Ada bring an umbrella?' — 'Because it was raining.' Mental states may *enable* such explanations, argue factualists and non-factualists, but they are no proper part of the *explanans*.

However, factualists and non-factualists are pervasively plagued by the *Problem of Error Cases*.²³ Consider the following case for illustration:

[no rain] Ada is in her apartment, getting ready to take a walk to her office. As she approaches her front door, she looks towards her window and sees droplets on it. Ada infers that it is raining. She prefers to get to work dry rather than wet from rain. So, she takes an umbrella with her. However, it is not actually raining — the droplets were produced by her neighbor who was watering her flowers in the apartment above Ada's.

In brief, the problem for factualists and non-factualists is to reconcile the plausible ideas that (a) Ada still had a reason that motivated her to bring the umbrella, and that (b) we should thus be able to explain her action in terms of her reason. In other words, since Ada had a reason of her own for bringing an umbrella, her doing so should be explainable in terms of this reason. However, since Ada's motivating reason was no fact (but a falsehood), she either had no reason to bring an umbrella at all (Alvarez 2010), or falsehoods can explain actions (Dancy 2000).

This chapter is dedicated to laying out both answers in more detail, arguing that none of them is satisfactory. To do this, I first present two plausible desiderata for our account of motivating reasons based upon the factualists' very own *Argument from Guidance*. I then show that neither factualists nor non-factualists can live up to both desiderata at the same time. I thus close by showing that the Problem of Error Cases

²³ See Hornsby (2008), Alvarez (2010), Dancy (2011), Hyman (2011), Comesaña and McGrath (2014), (Dancy 2014), Hyman (2015), Locke (2015), Alvarez (2018), Singh (2019) for recent answers to this problem.

simply does not arise for Humeans. As long as we *either* hold that motivating reasons *or* that the full *explanans* in reason explanations are constituted by the agent's perspective, we circumvent the problem. Note: I have so far only referred to factualist positions explicitly, implying that non-factualists generally work analogously. Since the Problem of Error Cases plagues these two positions in different ways, I will more carefully differentiate between them in this chapter.

§ 5.1 The Problem

In order to see the force of the Problem of Error Cases, let me motivate two plausible desiderata for any account of reason explanations, i.e. explanations of actions in terms of motivating reasons. In brief, these desiderata are the following:

[*no falsehood*] Falsehoods cannot explain.²⁴

[*no normative*] We can act for motivating reasons that are no normative reasons.²⁵

The first constraint hardly needs to be motivated. As we have already noted (§2.2), explanation is a relation “that holds between facts or truths” (Strawson 1985, 109). What explains are facts, not falsehoods. More precisely, the *explanans* in an explanation must not be a falsehood. Falsehoods are simply not in the business of explaining anything.

To motivate the second desideratum, return to practical deliberation and the factualist account of what it means to be *motivated* by a reason:

- [**MR_F**]: *r* is A's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
- (i) *r* guides A's ϕ ing in the sense that
 - [*Favor*] ... *r* seems to A to favor ϕ ing, and
 - [*Light*] ... A ϕ s in the light of *r*, and
 - (ii) *r* reason-explains A's ϕ ing

The idea, recall, is that motivating reasons motivate action in the sense of *guiding* it, where this notion is closely tied to their functional role in deliberation *prior to* acting. In deliberating practically, we ideally consider the *normative* reasons pertaining to our situation. In the good case, that is, I think only about and ‘weigh’ (Raz 1975, 40) the

²⁴ See Strawson (1985), Hornsby (2008), Hawthorne and Stanley (2008), Raz (2009), Alvarez (2010), Dancy (2014), Littlejohn (2012), and Hyman (2015).

²⁵ See Dancy (2000), Schroeder (2007), Miller (2008), Hieronymi (2011), Heuer (2014), and Singh (2019).

relevant normative reasons when thinking about what to do or how to ϕ . When Ada forms the belief that it is raining, she has to consider how she will manage to remain dry on her way to work. One way of achieving this is for Ada to take an umbrella. As Ada thus recognizes, the fact that it is raining favors her taking an umbrella. Since the fact that it is raining *actually* favors her taking an umbrella, it is a normative reason for her to take an umbrella. So in thinking about what to do, Ada ideally considers the normative reasons pertaining to her situation.

This is consistent with both factualist and non-factualist positions. Recall that both factualists and non-factualists argue that we consider our motivating reasons in practical deliberation.²⁶ Now we can see why they think this. If both normative and motivating reasons are facts, then we may consider our motivating reasons *in* considering normative reasons (Raz 1975; Alvarez 2010; Hyman 2015). Since facts are true *propositions*, we may also consider motivating reasons *in* considering normative reasons if motivating reasons are just propositions (Miller 2008; Singh 2019). That is, some of the motivating reasons (i.e. propositions) we consider may be true and speak in favor of ϕ ing — in that case, we consider normative reasons. Finally, if both normative and motivating reasons are states of affairs, then we may also consider our motivating reasons *in* considering normative reasons (Dancy 2000; 2018). So for any factualist or non-factualist position, it is consistent to say that we consider normative and motivating reasons in practical deliberation.

However, we only *ideally* consider exclusively normative reasons. Unsurprisingly, we may be wrong about some of the things we actually take into account. In particular, we may be wrong in either of two ways (Singh 2019, 411). First, we may mistakenly think that the consideration is really true, i.e. that it really is a fact. Like in [*no rain*], it may just be false that it is raining. If so, then there was no corresponding fact that favored Ada's bringing an umbrella. Ada considered and acted upon a falsehood, not a fact. Second, we may be mistaken about what it is that the facts favor. Ada may mistakenly think, for instance, that the fact that it is raining favors her putting on her favorite pair of gloves in order to protect her from getting wet on her way to work. Ada considers a fact but is mistaken about what this fact favors. From the agential perspective, we can thus make two kinds of mistakes regarding the facts that favor our ϕ ing.

²⁶ See Dancy (2000, 10), Miller (2008, 228), Alvarez (2010, 5), Dancy (2014, 85), Heuer (2014, 292), Dancy (2018), and Singh (2019) among others.

Importantly, in thinking about what to do, these considerations still *seem to one* to be normative reasons. From the perspective of the agent, there is simply no difference between the good case and the bad case. After all, I would not take the putative fact *that it is raining* into consideration if I did not hold that it is true. As [Favor] says, agents consider what *seem to them* to be normative reasons for ϕ ing. As such, even falsehoods may still constitute part of my practical deliberation. The reasoning will be unsound, of course, but unsound reasoning is still reasoning — it just incorporates false propositions as opposed to exclusively true ones.

So facts cannot plausibly exhaust the category of things we consider in practical deliberation. Normative reasons are facts that favor responses. In thinking about what to do, I ideally think about normative reasons. I may be wrong, however. But even so, there's still *something* I'm thinking about, and from my perspective as the deliberating agent, there is nothing that distinguishes this from the genuinely normative reasons I'm considering. Phenomenologically, there is no difference for me between considering facts and falsehoods, i.e. genuinely normative reasons and merely apparently normative reasons.

Accordingly, “we can have [and act for] motivating reasons that fail to be normative reasons” (Singh 2019, 412).²⁷ Our case [*no rain*] illustrates this. Ada sees the droplets on the window. She infers *that it is raining*. It is this supposed fact that she takes into consideration and that leads her to take the umbrella. It is not true that it is raining, but since Ada does not realize this, she still processes this falsehood as a fact and acts accordingly. Since factualists and non-factualists *define* motivating reasons as those that (i) the agent *takes* to favor ϕ ing and (ii) that the agent subsequently ϕ s in the light of, we must conclude that Ada's motivating reason in [*no rain*] is a falsehood, namely, *that it is raining*. Ada has a motivating reason, but that motivating reason is no fact. Hence, factualists' own argument for the sense in which motivating reasons ‘motivate’ action, i.e. [*guidance*], seems to imply that we sometimes act for a motivating reason that is no normative reason, i.e. [*no normative*].

The *Problem of Error Cases* then arises because of factualists' and non-factualists' accounts of the sense in which motivating reasons ‘motivate’ action in combination with their account of reason explanation. To see this, recall their *Argument from Guidance*:

²⁷ This is Singh's (2019, 412) *No-good Reason Constraint*, that is, the idea that one's motivating reasons for ϕ ing need not necessarily be normative reasons for ϕ ing.

- [guidance]**
- (i) r motivates A 's ϕ ing as their reason iff
[Favor] ... r seems to A to favor ϕ ing, and
[Light] ... A ϕ s in the light of r .
 - (ii) Only (putative) facts can seem to one to favor ϕ ing.
 - (iii) One can only ϕ in the light of (putative) facts.
-
- (C) So, only (putative) facts can motivate A 's ϕ ing as their reason.

At first, we simply stipulated away the importance of the '(putative)' that precedes any mention of 'fact'. Now, however, we can see why this was quite an important addition. The point is precisely that agents are not infallible and thus consider falsehoods (or mere *putative* facts) in their deliberation. Moreover, after having decided what to do, they may also act in the light of those falsehoods. For all intents and purposes, it thus seems as if agents may be motivated by falsehoods just as much as they can be motivated by facts. Hence, if motivating reasons guide action, falsehoods must similarly be able to guide action (cf. Hyman 2015).

But this means that if motivating reasons can reason-explain actions, then falsehoods must be able to reason-explain actions. This follows quite straightforwardly from their argument for their account of reason explanations:

- [enabling]**
- (i) Reason explanations involve A 's reason r for ϕ ing
 - (ii) If A ϕ 's for reason r , then r can explain A 's ϕ ing
 - (iii) If r can explain A 's action, then r is manifested in A 's perspective
-
- (C*) Reason explanations involve A 's r for ϕ ing,
as manifested in A 's perspective

To see the problem, let's put these two arguments together, substituting 'falsehoods' for 'putative facts' in order to bring out what's really behind that latter formulation. We arrive at the following conundrum for factualists and non-factualists who want to maintain their account of reason explanations:

- [error]**
- (i) Only facts and falsehoods can motivate A 's ϕ ing as their reason r .
 - (ii) If A ϕ 's for reason r , then r all by itself can *r-explain* A 's ϕ ing.
-
- (C) Only facts and falsehoods can all by themselves *r-explain* A 's ϕ ing.

Premise (i) is the more explicitly expressed conclusion of [*guidance*], and premise (ii) is the second premise of [*enabling*]. To make it explicit, I have rendered (ii) such that it specifically mentions *reason explanations* (i.e. *r-explanations*) of actions, and that it holds that motivating reasons *alone* are sufficient for reason explanations. The point, after all, is that motivating reasons explain action in this specific manner of explanation. Together, they yield the view that falsehoods can explain actions. This is an unacceptable conclusion — [*error*] simply reads like a *reductio* of factualist and non-factualist positions. Most importantly, factualists and non-factualists inevitably run into this problem precisely because of their *own* accounts of what motivating reasons are and how they can explain actions.

§ 5.2 Non-Humean Solutions

There are two types of answers available in the factualist and non-factualist literature. While factualists simply deny that falsehoods can constitute motivating reasons and thus alter premise (i), non-factualists bite the bullet and accept the conclusion. As I argue, however, each account fails to live up to one of the two desiderata I have set out above. This section is thus dedicated to outlining these answers and their respective problems. This should then motivate our considering a Humean account of reason explanations again. If we cannot stipulate away premise (i), and if we do not want to accept the conclusion, the natural suggestion is to reconsider the precise meaning of premise (ii) instead. That is, we should reconsider whether either motivating reasons or reason explanations are constituted by the agent's perspective after all, thus leading us back to Humeanism.

§ 5.2.1 *Factualism*

Factualists simply deny that falsehoods can be motivating reasons (Alvarez 2010; Hyman 2015; Alvarez 2018). At best, they argue, falsehoods are mere *apparent* reasons — but just like fools' gold is not an inferior type of gold but no gold at all, mere apparent reasons simply are no real reasons at all. So factualists dispute premise (i) as it stands now and adjust [*error*] accordingly:

- [*error_F*]
- (i) Only facts can motivate *A*'s ϕ ing as their reason *r*.
 - (ii) If *A* ϕ 's for reason *r*, then *r* all by itself can *r-explain* *A*'s ϕ ing.
-
- (C) Only facts can all by themselves *r-explain* *A*'s ϕ ing.

Since it is only facts that can constitute our motivating reasons, it is only facts that can reason-explain our action. This resolves the tension because we can now safely conclude that only facts can explain actions.

But this resolution comes at a price. Most pertinently, it lives up to [*no falsehood*] by giving up on [*no normative*]. In other words, in order to resist the idea that falsehoods can explain actions, factualists simply insist that motivating reasons must be facts. However, this decidedly goes against the argument from practical deliberation I have set out above. As such, it goes against their own considerations for making their Argument from Guidance plausible. Factualists thus effectively give up on their own motivation for the *guidance* sense of 'motivation'. If that is not enough, it moreover entails three quite implausible upshots.

First, this implies that actions that are based upon some error are not apt for being reason-explained. There is no explanation of the action in terms of the agent's reasons for such actions. This, in turn, means that even paradigmatic cases of pre-mediated, intentional actions cannot be explained in terms of the agent's motivating reasons for so acting. One may be hesitant to think of *all* actions that are intentional as actions done for motivating reasons (see Hursthouse 1991; Heuer 2014). Certain fringe cases of intentional agency like jumping around in excitement upon hearing good news may plausibly defy the explanation of it in terms of the agent's reasons for doing so. However, Ada's bringing an umbrella in [*no rain*] is no fringe case of an intentional action — it is a very clear instance of a pre-meditated, deliberate action. So factualists cannot account for the rather plausible idea that paradigmatic instances of intentional actions are actions done for motivating reasons.

Second, and relatedly, this goes decidedly against another of the primary motivations for factualist accounts of motivating reasons: the importance of first-personal considerations in accounting for what it means to be motivated by a reason. Recall that [*guidance*] was motivated primarily by considerations pertaining to the agent's perspective. From the first-personal perspective, the thought went, it does not seem to us as if we consider our own mental states in acting for a motivating reason. The problem is

that restricting motivating reasons to facts completely discards the importance of the agential perspective in acting for a motivating reason. As I have argued above, from the agential perspective, it makes no difference whether p is a fact or a falsehood. If I consider p in my deliberation, then it must *seem to me* as if it were a fact that favors ϕ ing — this is, after all, precisely what [*Favor*] says. However, [*error_F*] now completely ignores this thought. It is not just that p must *seem* to me to be a fact that favors ϕ ing, it must also *actually* be a fact that favors ϕ ing. With this resolution of [*error*], factualists in effect undermine their own motivation for thinking of motivating reasons as considerations that seem to one to favor ϕ ing, i.e. [*Favor*].

The third and final problem comes from a similar place: Alvarez, in effect, simply confounds motivating and normative reasons, thus making [*error_F*] seem rather *ad hoc*.²⁸ I said above that we can make two types of errors: factual and normative. I may be wrong about p being a fact, or about p favoring ϕ ing. Now, according to [*error_F*], only cases of factual error should be excluded from yielding motivating reasons. The problem is, after all, that *falsehoods* cannot explain phenomena. This is fair enough since motivating reasons' capacity to explain action is partly definitional of it, as we have seen (§2.3). However, elsewhere in her book, Alvarez argues that normative failures also impugn upon the consideration's status as a motivating reason: “my reason for stabbing my victim, namely that I don't like his shoes, is not simply not a good reason to stab someone — it is rather no reason to do so” (Alvarez 2010, 143) — meaning that the agent did not have a *motivating* reason to stab their victim. If this is so, however, then motivating reasons just are co-extensional with normative reasons. It's not just their status as fact that makes them into potentially motivating reasons, but also their actually favoring certain responses. The concept of a motivating reason is just the concept of a normative reason that can occasionally explain actions.

The problem is that this clearly goes beyond the still justifiable rationale of excluding something as a motivating on the grounds that it cannot explain the action. In other words, that I don't like his shoes *can* explain my stabbing him (given certain background conditions and presuppositions) — the only problem it has it that it is no *normative* reason for stabbing him. However, if this is why it cannot be a motivating reason either, then we are really just confounding motivating and normative reasons. As Dancy (2000, 2) notes:

²⁸ See Singh (2019) for a similar criticism.

if an agent does something extremely silly, we might say he had a motivating reason for doing what he did but little normative reason. What this means is that we can give a certain sort of explanation for his acting as he did, but we cannot defend it.

While some motivating reason's incapacity to explain the action might be reasonable grounds for denying it the status of a motivating reason, its incapacity to objectively *justify* an action is simply unmotivated. It is no formal feature of motivating reasons that they must be good reasons for so acting.

To summarize, there are three problems with the factualist solution to [error], each being entailed by factualists' giving up on the [no normative] desideratum. First, it yields the rather unintuitive conclusion that clearly intentional and pre-meditated actions are not explainable in terms of the agent's motivating reason for so acting. Second, this solutions thereby decidedly goes against the first-personal considerations that motivated factualist accounts of motivating reasons in the first place. Third, factualists seem to simply confound normative and motivating reasons, thus casting doubt on their really describing the relevant kind of reason in the first place.

One immediate adjustment that dovetails with the factualist account would be to go *disjunctivist*. This is, in a certain sense, what Alvarez does:

in error cases it is not possible to construct a *reason* explanation, and so, in those cases, we must resort to a Humean explanation: one whose explanans is a statement to the effect that the agent believed that p; for example: 'She left her job because she believed that she had a fatal disease'. (Alvarez 2010, 179)

So the factualist solution is to still deny the possibility of a reason explanation in error cases, but concede that the Humean type of explanation works in those cases. So actions can *either* be reason-explained, *or* explained via the agent's mental states. Although Ada's bringing an umbrella cannot be explained by *the fact that it was raining*, it can certainly be explained by *the fact that she believed that it was raining*.

Note, however, that this is a disjunct at the level of explanation, not motivation. As such, this solution still comes at the expense of [no normative]. That is, it still entails all the problematic upshots I have pointed out above because it still denies that the agent had a motivating reason for ϕ ing in such cases.

§ 5.2.2 *Non-Factualism*

Non-factualists disagree with factualists regarding the exact conditions some reason r needs to satisfy in order to be A 's motivating reason. In particular, while factualists hold that r must be a fact (i.e. a true proposition), non-factualists argue that motivating reasons may also be *false* propositions (Miller 2008; Singh 2019) or merely *possible* states of affairs (Dancy 2000). Roughly, non-factualists maintain that motivating reasons do not have to satisfy a standard of correctness in order to be an agent's motivating reason.

As such, non-factualists argue that we should truly take the phenomenology of acting for a motivating reason seriously, thus living up to [*no normative*]. From Ada's perspective, it really did seem to rain. As such, she took this into consideration when thinking about what to do, and subsequently acted upon it. Throughout, Ada is considering what is from her perspective *the fact that it is raining*. Now, it may not really be a fact, but that does not at all impugn upon its function in the motivation of Ada's action. If there was something that motivated Ada, then it was *that it was raining* — it's not being a fact simply does not alter this. As opposed to factualists, then, non-factualists really just rely on [*Favor*] and [*Light*] in order to characterize motivating reasons, refraining from importing more substantial features of *normative* reasons into their account of motivating reasons. Accordingly, non-factualists accept [*error*] just as is:

- [*error*]
- (i) Only facts and falsehoods can motivate A 's ϕ ing as their reason r .
 - (ii) If A ϕ 's for reason r , then r all by itself can *r-explain* A 's ϕ ing.
-
- (C) Only facts and falsehoods can all by themselves *r-explain* A 's ϕ ing.

Dancy (2000, 133) thus holds that “the purposes of explanation of action in terms of the agent's reasons do not require such explanation to be factive.” Reason explanations must merely enable “us to see how the agent might have taken certain features of the action as good reasons to do it” (Dancy 2000, 95). So what reason explanations *must do* is make the action intelligible, and intelligibility does not require the truth of the agent's reason. All that needs to be the case is that “were things as the agent supposed them to be, the action would have been right” (Dancy 2000, 95). Had it in fact been raining, this fact would have made Ada's bringing an umbrella right. Now, it just so happens that it was not actually raining. Notwithstanding, this hypothetical normative relation still makes Ada's bringing an umbrella intelligible. In other words, in seeing that the supposed fact that it

was raining was indeed Ada's reason for bringing an umbrella, we have a better understanding of *why* she did so — this falsehood still makes her action intelligible.

So, all we need are ways of explaining action that do not imply the truth of the agent's motivating reason. Dancy (2000, 133) thus argues that there is a type of explanatory locution that allows the explainer to retain a non-committal attitude toward the truth of the reason they are citing within the explanation. The locution in question is the *appositional* locution we have encountered earlier (§4.2): "Ada took an umbrella because, as she believed, it was raining." According to Dancy, this locution allows the speaker to distance themselves from a commitment to the truth of the *explanans*, namely, the agent's motivating reason. Now, Ada's reason was *that it is raining*. But by explicitly inserting the previously noted *appositional* 'as she believed', we mark the speaker's distance towards the truth of the motivating reason they are referring to. The speaker can thus cancel the conversational implicature of it being true that it was raining. Notwithstanding, such explanations still enable "us to see how the agent might have taken certain features of the action as good reasons to do it" (Dancy 2000, 95). Hence, reason explanations can both involve falsities that the explainer is not committed to espousing as truths, and make the action intelligible — [error] is really no problem at all.

Here is an example to make this more concrete. After asking me why Ada has brought her umbrella, I may answer that 'Ada took the umbrella because, as she believed, it was raining. However, it was not actually raining, so she really should have left it at home.' The truth of Ada's motivating reason may be implicated, but we can cancel this implicature without losing explanatory value. That is, through the appositional reading of this answer, I still answer your question and make Ada's bringing an umbrella intelligible to you. You now have a better grasp as to *why* Ada brought an umbrella, and this is so despite my citing a falsehood as Ada's reason for doing so. As Dancy (2014, 91) remarks, "when we explain an action as having been done for the reason that *p*, the agent's having been right in believing that *p* adds nothing to the force of the explanation."

To see the appeal of this answer, compare it to the factulist solution. I have identified three problematic upshots of the factulist solution (§5.2.1). Non-factualists are able to circumvent at least some of them. They can allow that even actions based upon misapprehensions may be done for motivating reasons and are thus explainable in terms of these reasons. Moreover, non-factualists thereby manage to properly live up to the phenomenology of acting for a reason. What marks some *r* as my motivating reason for

ϕing is my *taking* it to favor ϕing, not its actually favoring ϕing. Factual errors thus do not impugn upon the status of a motivating reason *as* the agent's motivating reason.

Non-factualists might still have a problem with normative errors, however. Recall that for Dancy (2000; 2014), false (or non-obtaining) motivating reasons can explain actions because they still make the agent's action intelligible. Had it actually been raining, Ada's bringing an umbrella would have been well justified. So even if it did not in fact rain, her action is still made intelligible to us precisely because of this normative relation that holds between the fact that it is raining and Ada's bringing an umbrella. However, we can also make *normative* errors. The problem with normative errors is precisely that there is no such normative relation that we could use as scaffolding to make the action intelligible. Whatever the facts of the case, putting on my favorite gloves is simply no means to remaining dry on my way to work. As such, it is not clear how we could cite this in one of Dancy's *normative explanations* of action. So although Dancy is decidedly closer to living up to [*no normative*] than factualists are, it seems that he cannot fully live up to it himself.

Moreover, despite Dancy's best efforts, philosophers have largely remained unconvinced by his account of how false motivating reasons can explain actions²⁹ — and for good reason. His arguments tend to obscure the kind of commitment one would adopt in accepting his account: it is not just that explanations of action may *contain* falsehoods, rather the falsehood contained *is the explanans itself*. Obviously, explanations more generally may contain falsehoods. A perfectly good (even if arguably incomplete) explanation for why Ada brought her umbrella in [*no rain*] is this: 'Ada believed that it was raining.' Factualists and non-factualists may deny that this is a *reason explanation* of Ada's action, but they do not deny that it is a possible explanation of it. Now, if it was not actually raining, then this explanation contains a falsehood. But this is no problem at all since the falsehood is embedded within a mental state, and mental states create intensional contexts. So, generally, true explanations may contain falsehoods, as long as these falsehoods are embedded within intensional contexts. What is problematic about Dancy's solution more specifically, is that the *explanans* itself may in its entirety be a falsehood. The non-factualist thus decidedly fails to live up to [*no falsehood*].

²⁹ See Hawthorne and Stanley (2008), Hornsby (2008), Alvarez (2010), Hyman (2011; 2015), Alvarez (2018).

Here is another way of putting the same point. Explanations may involve falsehoods *as long as* it is not the falsehood that constitutes the entire *explanans*. As such, the *explanans* for Ada’s bringing an umbrella in [*no rain*] may be *that she believed that it was raining*. This is because even though the *explanans* contains a falsehood, it is not entirely constituted by it. However, this is not what Dancy (2000) is committed to. He argues both that it is *that it is raining* that constitutes Ada’s motivating reason, and that this thus constitutes the *entire explanans* for her action. As such, Dancy is not just committed to saying that explanations may contain falsehoods, he is committed to saying that they may be *constituted entirely* by falsehoods — that’s a rather hard bullet to bite.³⁰

§ 5.3 A Neat Humean Solution

As we have seen, both solutions to [*error*] currently on offer in the factualist and non-factualist literature come with some problematic commitments. They thereby fail to live up to [*no normative*] and [*no falsehood*], respectively. In this section, I thus sketch a Humean answer to this problem. In brief, [*error*] really is no problem at all for Humeans precisely because they hold that reason explanations constitutively involve the agent’s perspective. Since the full *explanans* in reason explanations is constituted by the agent’s mental states, and since mental states create intensional contexts, falsehoods embedded within these states do not impede the *explanans*’s explanatory value. I thus conclude that Humeans quite neatly circumvent this entire problem simply by allowing for the agent’s perspective to constitute the *explanans* in reason explanations. To start, consider [*error*] again:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| [error] | (i) Only facts and falsehoods can motivate A’s ϕ ing as their reason <i>r</i> . |
| | (ii) If A ϕ ’s for reason <i>r</i> , then <i>r</i> all by itself can <i>r-explain</i> A’s ϕ ing. |
| | (C) Only facts and falsehoods can all by themselves <i>r-explain</i> A’s ϕ ing. |

Recall that premises (i) and (ii) stem from specifically factualist and non-factualist commitments regarding reason explanations. Since Humeans don’t accept them, they don’t encounter this problem.

³⁰ Dancy (2014) has subsequently revised his position because of this problem. His new answer is that reason-explanations do not have an *explanans* at all. Since this is similarly implausible, I won’t consider this suggestion here.

More specifically, there are two ways in which Humeans can resist the argument. First, they may accept (ii) but insist that it is our mental states that constitute our motivating reasons. As such, they would alter (i) such that it aligns with their belief-desire account of motivating reasons. This is the traditional Humean position as espoused by Davidson (1963) and Smith (1994):

- [*error_H*]
- (i) Only *A*'s motivating states can motivate *A*'s ϕ ing as their reason *r*.
 - (ii) If *A* ϕ 's for reason *r*, then *r* all by itself can *r-explain* *A*'s ϕ ing.
-
- (C) Only *A*'s motivating states can *r-explain* *A*'s ϕ ing.

This results in the view I have already hinted at in my criticism of Dancy. Explanations of actions can contain falsehoods if those falsehoods are embedded within mental states. This is because mental states create intensional contexts. So even if it is false that it is raining, it can be true that Ada believes that it is raining. As such, we can consistently hold that Ada's motivating reason constitutes the entire *explanans* in a reason explanation of her action. This is because (i) now says that her motivating reason consists of Ada's mental states. If her motivating reason consists in her mental states, the contents of these states may be false without affecting the truth of the truth of the motivating reason itself.

Hence, [*error_H*] can account for the desiderata I set out before, all the while circumventing the further problematic upshots that factualists and non-factualists encounter. First, Humeans are not committed to the implausible claim that falsehoods can constitute the *explanans* in reason explanations — the *explanans* may contain falsehoods, but those will always be embedded within intensional contexts and thus do not render the *explanans* itself false. Hence, Humeans live up to [*no falsehood*].

Second, Humeans also account for the plausible idea that intentional actions based upon factual mistakes are still explainable in terms of the agent's motivating reasons. They thus do not fall prey to the problem of conflating motivating with normative reasons. As I have argued above, factual errors do not impugn upon the status of a motivating reason *as* the agent's motivating reason. Even if it was not actually raining, Ada can still be motivated by her belief that this is so. Moreover, this belief will still yield a true explanation of her action.

I would moreover argue that Humeans can also deal with normative errors. The problem for Dancy was that there simply is no normative relation between the facts in

question that could make the action intelligible to us. This is just to say that *simply citing the facts as perceived by the agent* does not make the action any more intelligible than it was before. Simply say *that it was raining* does nothing to explain why Ada put on her favorite gloves. Humeans, however, do more than this: they explicitly include the agent's perspective into the *explanans* in the first place. As such, they can easily widen the amount of information regarding the agent's beliefs and desires that is needed in order to make their action intelligible. The motivating reason that explains Ada's putting on her gloves would be this: "Ada wanted to remain dry on her way to work, and believed that putting on her favorite gloves would achieve this." The motivating reason thus still refers to a normative error of Ada's, all the while making her action intelligible by explicitly framing it as a (mistaken) means-end belief of hers. Hence, Humeans have a plausible story to tell regarding normative errors. Humeans thus manage to live up to both [*no falsehood*] and [*no normative*].

Now, one may still hold that the concept of a motivating reason is better captured by the factualist's idea of motivating reasons as *guiding* action. I will argue against this more comprehensively later (§6). For now, recall that I have noted that we can consistently hold that motivating reasons are facts, propositions, or states of affairs, while also holding that the *explanans* in reason explanations consists of the agent's motivating states (§3.2):

- [MR_D]:** *r* is A's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
- (i) *r* guides A's ϕ ing, and
 - (ii) *r* is embedded in a belief-desire pair that *reason-explains* A's ϕ ing

The Dretskean solution to [*error*] would retain the Humean spirit for its account of reason explanations, while conceding a factualist or non-factualist account of motivating reasons. For illustrative purposes, let's consider the non-factualist version of the Dretskean solution to [*error*]. This is the advantage of showcasing how this solution can keep all the positive upshots of Dancy's (2000) account, while avoiding the problematic conclusion that falsehoods can explain actions. So while the traditional Humean solution accepted (ii) and reconsidered (i), the Dretskean solution does the reverse, accepting (i) and reconsidering (ii):

- [*error_D*]
- (i) Only facts and falsehoods can motivate A 's ϕ ing as their reason r .
 - (ii) If A ϕ 's for reason r , then r is embedded in a belief-desire pair that r -*explains* A 's ϕ ing.
-
- (C) Only facts and falsehoods that are embedded in a belief-desire pair can r -*explain* A 's ϕ ing.

This should allow us to see that simply by insisting that reason explanations necessarily involve the agent's perspective in *some* way, the Problem of Error Cases can be circumvented. In other words, the Problem arises only if we hold *both* that motivating reasons are non-mental entities *and* that the *explanans* in reason explanations consists entirely of the agent's motivating reason. Accordingly, simply allowing the agent's perspective to be an essential part of either of these two conditions solves [*error*] without any of the problematic upshots of factualist and non-factualist accounts.

Let me briefly summarize what this should tell us. Factualists put pressure on Humean accounts of motivating reasons and reason explanations in two ways. First, they argue that the Humean account of motivating reasons and motivating states fails to account for what it is like to act for a motivating reason. Second, factualists argue that their account of motivating reasons still yields a plausible account of reason explanations. I have now provided us with good reasons to doubt the latter claim. If the agent's perspective plays no part in reason explanations, then we encounter the Problem of Error Cases. This problem can be solved quite neatly by simply allowing for the agent's perspective to enter into reason explanations, either by way of constituting the motivating reason, or by way of constituting the full *explanans* in reason explanations. As I have argued further, any non-psychological solution to [*error*] currently available results in a host of problematic upshots: paradigmatic cases of intentional actions end up not being explainable in terms of the reason that motivated the agent to do it; the factualist's own phenomenological motivation for their account of motivating reasons ends up being undermined; and falsehoods may constitute the *explanans* in reason explanations. Hence, we have good reason to retain a Humean account of reason explanations — either by espousing Humeanism regarding motivating reasons themselves, or by conceding that the full *explanans* in reason explanations is constituted by the agent's perspective.

Hence, if factualists and non-factualists want to avoid the Problem of Error Cases, they are pressed to at least adopt the Dretskean account of motivating reasons and reason

explanations: motivating reasons may guide actions, but only mental states fully explain them. However, as I argue further, factualists can in fact not provide any substantial basis upon which their *Argument from Guidance* rests (§6). In other words, there are no first-personal grounds upon which factualists can build their case in favor of their *guidance* sense of ‘motivation’. Moreover, I present positive arguments how Humean can account for the phenomenology of considering one’s own reasons for acting *via* transparency accounts of mental states (§6.3). In short, Humeans can explain both the third- and first-personal considerations that factualists cite in favor of their view. Factualists, on the other hand, actually fail to fully live up to either perspective on actions.

§6 THE ARGUMENT FROM GUIDANCE RECONSIDERED

This chapter is dedicated to showing that the phenomenological motivation for the factualist's complaints is unfounded. As I argue, there is no substantive motivation for the *guidance* sense of 'motivation' at all (§§6.1 – 6.2). Factualists object to Humean accounts of motivating reasons on the grounds that belief-desire reasons do not plausibly play the distinctively first-personal role that motivating reasons play for us as agents. For this end, they argue for two constitutive features of motivating reasons: [*Favor*] and [*Light*]. For both of these features, facts are the most plausible candidate to fulfill that specific role. Conversely, beliefs and desires are exceptionally implausible candidates. We do not take our mental states to favor anything. Neither do we plausibly act in light of our own mental states:

- [*guidance*] (i) *r* motivates *A*'s ϕ ing as their reason iff
 [*Favor*] ... *r* seems to *A* to favor ϕ ing, and
 [*Light*] ... *A* ϕ s in the light of *r*.
- (ii) Only (putative) facts can seem to one to favor ϕ ing.
 (iii) One can only ϕ in the light of (putative) facts.
-
- (C) So, only (putative) facts can motivate *A*'s ϕ ing as their reason.

After more careful scrutiny, however, two problems become apparent. The first is that not everything we take to favor ϕ ing *prior to* acting is *ipso facto* among our motivating reasons for ϕ ing. Factualists thus cannot purely rely on [*Favor*] and (ii) to substantiate their claim that motivating reasons must be facts. The second problem is that according to extant analyses, there is no distinct phenomenology of acting in the light of a reason at all. As I show (§5.1), acting 'in the light of' some fact does not play the phenomenologically interesting role that factualists need it to play. Premise (iii) and [*Light*] thus do not motivate a factualist ontology either. Hence, even granting the factualist that we consider motivating reasons *prior to* and *in* acting, factualists actually have no phenomenological grounds that support their ontological claims.

As such, factualists actually have no grounds to complain that Humeans cannot live up to the phenomenological reality of considering and acting for motivating reasons. In fact, if there is a phenomenology of considering one's motivating reasons, then

Humeans can perfectly well explain it *via* transparency accounts of mental states (§6.3). As such, and despite recent arguments to the contrary, Humeans fare at least as well as factualists when it comes to “the kind of representation that is ‘of’ action in the subjective sense that it is characteristic of someone who is performing an action” (Ford 2017, 223).

§ 6.1 On Considering Motivating Reasons *prior to* ϕ ing

Start with the fact that [*Favor*] does not entail any account of what it must be like to consider our motivating reasons. In brief, the problem is that it is neither necessary nor sufficient that something seems to me to favor ϕ ing in order for it to be among my motivating reasons for ϕ ing. Hence, what it is like to consider one’s motivating reasons is not fully captured by what it is like to consider facts one takes to favor ϕ ing.

Since factualists hold that our first-personal engagement with reasons paradigmatically occurs in deliberation, the first part of the Argument from Guidance is best expressed in these terms (see also §5.1). Miller (2008, 225), for instance, repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the role motivating reasons play “from the perspective of first-person deliberation.” Similarly, Alvarez (2010, 5) holds that it is a partly definitive feature of motivating reasons that they “can be premises in the agent’s implicit or explicit practical reasoning.” As I argue below, however, my points extend beyond the context of practical deliberation.

Recall that in practical deliberation, we consider what seem to us to be facts that favor ϕ ing (Scanlon 1998; Alvarez 2010; Dancy 2018). Since motivating reasons can constitute premises in practical deliberation (Miller 2008; Alvarez 2010; Dancy 2018), they must thus seem to us to be facts that favor ϕ ing — otherwise, we wouldn’t take them into consideration. As such, argues the factualist, what it is like to consider motivating reasons must be just what it is like to consider facts. This is best explained if motivating reasons just *are* facts (Alvarez 2010) and is not at all explained if they were mental states.

However, this argument does not hold up. First of all, considering p in practical deliberation is not necessary for p to be among our motivating reasons. We can act for motivating reasons without prior deliberation. Even factualists agree with this. Alvarez (2010, 114) herself holds that “the agent may not actually or explicitly go through a process of reasoning” and still act for a reason. Dancy (2018, 11) similarly thinks that one “can act in the light of a reason” without prior reasoning.

More importantly, however, considering p in practical deliberation is not even sufficient for p to be among our motivating reasons. We may consider facts in deliberation that do not motivate us to act. Consider Phil again, the avid anti-vegan who just happens to be allergic to meat. The fact that some dish is vegan favors Phil's ordering it because it implies that it does not contain meat. Yet, Phil would never count *that this dish is vegan* as among the reasons that motivated him to order it even if it entered his reasoning — he would never act for *that* reason. This is so even if Phil deduces that this dish does not contain meat from the fact that it is vegan through deliberation. A fact may figure in A 's reasoning without plausibly constituting A 's motivating reason for ϕ ing.

This is simply a way of expressing the idea that reasons are description-relative. Recall that motivating reasons are typically held to constitute a particular kind of explanatory reason. Whatever motivated the agent to ϕ is also apt to explain their ϕ ing *as their reason*. Now, explanations are description-relative (Alvarez 2010; Dancy 2014). As such, motivating reasons must be description-relative as well. The fact *that it is noon* may explain my leaving for lunch without being my reason for doing so — my reason was *that it is lunchtime*. Similarly, the fact *that this dish is vegan* does not explain Phil's ordering it *qua* Phil's reason — Phil's reason was *that this dish does not include meat*.

Notice that this point extends beyond the context of practical deliberation. Even that some fact seems to A to favor ϕ ing (i.e. [*Favor*]) is insufficient for that fact to be among A 's motivating reasons for ϕ ing. Phil knows full well that the fact that the dish is vegan actually favors his ordering the dish. Still, he does not act for *that* reason. So what it is like to consider one's motivating reasons is captured *neither* by the phenomenology of practical deliberation, *nor* even by the phenomenology of taking a fact to favor ϕ ing. In other words, the phenomenology of considering motivating reasons is not identical to the phenomenology of considering facts that favor ϕ ing. Premise (ii) and [*Favor*] are thus insufficient to point toward a factualist account of motivating reasons.

§ 6.2 On Considering Motivating Reasons *in* ϕ ing

Motivating reasons are not just facts we take to favor ϕ ing, factualists argue; they are also the facts *in the light of which* we ϕ . This idea is very commonly cited to support factualist accounts of motivating reasons.³¹ In acting in the light of a reason, the idea would go, it

³¹ See Dancy (2000, 6), Miller (2008, 224), Alvarez (2010, 36), Locke (2015, 221), Hyman (2015, 157), Singh (2019, 409), Cunningham (2021, 1570), Starzak and Schlicht (2023, 17).

does not seem to us that we act in the light of our own mental states. Rather, it seems to us that we act with a view to the facts that we take to favor ϕ ing. So with this supplement to [*Favor*], factualists might account for the phenomenology of acting for motivating reasons. As I argue now, however, according to the only extant analyses of what it means to act ‘in the light of’ a fact, [*Light*] has no phenomenological upshot at all — it is a purely explanatory notion.

Note first that Alvarez (2010; 2017; 2018) nowhere specifies what it means to act in the light of a reason. Although she repeatedly says that a motivating reason is “a reason for which someone acts: a reason someone takes to favour acting and in the light of which they act” (Alvarez 2018, 3297), she does not discuss this notion any further. We must thus resort to extant analyses of ‘acting in the light of’ a fact. To the best of my knowledge, only two are available: one by Hyman (2011; 2015), and one by Locke (2015).

Hyman (2015) and Locke (2015) both treat ϕ ing *for* or *in the light of* a motivating reason as equivalent to being *guided* by that reason. Locke (2015, 219) argues that acting *for* a reason just means “to be *guided by a fact in acting as one does*.” Hyman (2015, 157) suggests the same equivalence when he says that a motivating reason is a fact “*in the light of which* the agent did the act being explained, a fact that *guided* her when she did it.” So to act *for* a reason or *in the light of* a reason is just to be *guided* by that reason. All of these are equivalent ways of circumscribing the concept of a motivating reason (Locke 2015, 221). Hence, we can note the following:

[*Light_G*] $A \phi$ s in the light of r iff A is guided by r in ϕ ing.

So, what does it mean to be *guided* by a reason? Again, Hyman has a ready answer:

If someone is said to have been guided by a certain fact, this means that he took it into consideration, when he modified his thought or behavior in some way, or decided what to think or what to do. (Hyman 2011, 361)

This also aligns well with what seems to be Alvarez’s own view when she says that

a reason is called a “motivating reason” because it is something that motivates an agent, that is, it is what he took to make his ϕ -ing right and hence to speak in favor of his ϕ -ing, *and which played a role in his deciding to ϕ* . (Alvarez 2010, 35; my emphasis)

So what it means to be guided by the consideration that p is just for that consideration to ‘play a role’ in one’s ϕ ing (where ‘ ϕ ing’ can denote both the action or the decision to act). Now, what kind of role must it play? Here is an initial characterization, based upon Hyman’s remarks above:

[*Light*_C] $A \phi$ s in the light of r iff A took r into consideration prior to ϕ ing.

This is obviously problematic given what the factualist must now show. The whole point of [*Light*] was to provide a *distinct* phenomenological upshot to support the factualist account for motivating reason. But now we have defined [*Light*] in terms of what it is like to consider reasons *prior to* acting. As I have just argued, however, the factualist does not offer a particular phenomenology of considering motivating reasons *prior to* action. This solution would thus not provide the factualist with the further phenomenological upshot [*Light*] was supposed to afford them.

Moreover, as Alvarez’s addition suggests, the agent’s ‘taking a fact into consideration’ must imply that that consideration also ‘played a role’ in their eventual ϕ ing. It is not sufficient that I briefly consider the fact *that Lou Malnati’s is the best deep dish pizza in Chicago* while I think about where to have lunch in Vienna for that fact to guide my decision. So on the more plausible reading of what Hyman means by ‘taking some fact into consideration’, it is the agent’s *considering* that fact that must play the relevant role in their eventual ϕ ing.

So what it means for p to be the reason that guided an agent’s ϕ ing, is that the agent’s *considering that* p played a role in their ϕ ing. This sounds reasonable, especially given that Alvarez (2010, 35, fn2) explicitly says that “all of the reasons that enter an agent’s reasoning about whether to ϕ [...] are] reasons for which the agent ϕ -ed.” The agent would be guided by all of those reasons precisely because, and only if, her considering them played a role in her ϕ ing. The question is just: what kind of role must it play?

Here’s a plausible suggestion made by Dancy (2000, 2): “Motivating reasons are supposed to be the ones that actually made a difference to how [one] acted.” This explains why my thought about Lou Malnati’s deep dish pizza was disqualified from being among my reasons for deciding to get lunch somewhere in Vienna — that fact did not make a difference to my ϕ ing. So here is a new suggestion:

[*Light_D*] $A \phi$ s in the light of r iff A 's considering r made a difference to A 's ϕ ing.

The problem is that this suggestion fails when we have more than sufficient reasons to act in a certain way. Consider the following scenario. My dear friend Marlene comes to visit Vienna. This fact alone is sufficient reason for me to bake her favorite cookies for her. Then I learn that it's also her birthday — 'all the more reason to bake those cookies,' I think.

The problem is this: the fact that it is Marlene's birthday can certainly *become my reason* for baking those cookies now that I've learned that this is so. That is, this fact can be among my motivating reasons for ϕ ing even though I have already had sufficient reasons to ϕ . Yet, this reason made no difference to my ϕ ing. The fact that it's also Marlene's birthday makes no difference whatsoever, neither in my decision to bake cookies, nor in my baking cookies, nor in the way I bake cookies. It did not alter *what* I did, nor *what* I decided to do.

The failure of this condition is quite instructive, however. The reason it failed was because it could not explain how a fact *in addition to* the already sufficient set of facts can become *my* motivating reason for ϕ ing. Accordingly, a proper explication of 'guidance' should be capable of accounting for this. One should be able to be guided by a consideration that made no actual difference to one's ϕ ing itself. So here is a final amendment:

[*Light_E*] $A \phi$ s in the light of p iff A 's considering p made a difference to *why* A ϕ ed.

This formulation can now account for the above case. The fact that Marlene is coming to town was my reason for baking cookies until the moment I learned that it's also her birthday. This did not change *what* I was doing, but it changed *why* I was doing it. This also makes sense of Alvarez's aforementioned comment that *all* of the reasons that I consider guide my action. This is because every additional consideration will slightly alter the exact grounds for *why* I perform this action or make this decision. Finally, it also aligns well with Hyman's comment that

a fact in view of which, or in the light of which, an agent does an act is a fact *because of which* she does it, not in the general sense of a reason why, but in the particular sense of a fact she was guided by, or took into consideration or account. (Hyman 2015, 168–169)

The idea that emerges is the following. Generally, we act in light of what seem to us to be facts that favor ϕ ing. This is what [*Favor*] says. [*Favor*] may not have a phenomenology of its own, but that we take r to favor ϕ ing is still a necessary condition for r to be our motivating reason for ϕ ing. So, once we have settled on what seem to us to be the relevant facts pertaining to our situation, we proceed to act in the light of these facts. These facts thus do not just constitute general explanatory reasons, but explanatory *qua* motivating reasons. That I am generous may explain my giving to charity without being *my* motivating reason for doing so — my reason was the children’s need, say. It is the children’s need that I considered to favor my giving to charity. As such, it is the children’s need that made a difference to *why* I gave to charity. So what captures the relevance of the motivating reason in this passage is its *explaining* the agent’s action in a specific way.

This is in effect what Locke (2015, 225) calls his *Explanatory-Representation View*. He argues that acting in the light of p just means taking p to be a normative reason for ϕ ing (2015, 221). That A takes p to be a normative reason for ϕ ing, however, just means that “ p is part of the explanatory history of [A ’s] ϕ -ing” (2015, 225). So, what it means for an agent to ϕ in the light of r is just for r to *explain* their ϕ ing. So both Hyman and Locke agree that to be guided by some fact is just for that fact to play a specific explanatory role for your ϕ ing. Hence, what it means to act *in the light of* some fact is just for that fact to *explain* your action.

The problem is that neither analysis imbues [*Light*] with a phenomenology of its own. Its main purpose is to connect motivating reasons to the explanation of action. So according to both Hyman’s and Locke’s explication, [*Light*] solely concerns the “perspective of third-person rationalizing explanations” (Miller 2008, 225) and not the agent’s first-personal engagement with reasons. On both analyses, [*Light*] has no phenomenological upshot at all. It thus cannot supplement [*Favor*] to account for the agent’s first-personal perspective on what it is like to act for a reason.

However, as I have argued (§6.1), factualists cannot rely solely on what it is like to consider facts one takes to favor ϕ ing in order to account for what it is like to consider one’s motivating reasons. This is because the phenomenology of considering our motivating reasons is not identical to that of considering facts one takes to favor ϕ ing. Without any additional phenomenological upshot from [*Light*], factualists thus lose all phenomenological grounds they cited to support their account of motivating reasons as facts.

Let's take stock. Factualists motivate their account of motivating reasons via considerations pertaining to what role these reasons fulfill for us as agents: we consider them both *prior to* and *in* acting. The first is supposed to be supported by the phenomenology of considering facts one takes to favor ϕ ing, the second by the phenomenology of acting in the light of a reason. I argued first that what it is like to consider one's motivating reasons is not identical to what it is like to consider facts that seem to one to favor ϕ ing. I then argued that on extant analyses, 'acting in the light of p ' implies no distinct phenomenology at all. So the problem is this: factualists motivate their *guidance* sense of 'motivation' by referring to what it is like to consider our motivating reasons *prior to* and *in* acting. However, as I have shown, there is simply no substance behind the admittedly intuitively compelling idea of what it is like for us to consider our motivating reasons *prior to* and *in* acting. Factualists in fact have no phenomenological grounds in support of their proposed sense in which motivating reasons 'motivate' action. Absent further arguments, we thus have no good reason to accept that motivating reasons 'motivate' action in the sense that they guide rather than cause them. In particular, we in fact have no reason to favor factualism over Humeanism that rests on what it is like to represent "action in the subjective sense that it is characteristic of someone who is *performing an action*" (Ford 2017, 223; my emphasis)

Finally, and most definitively damning for the factualist account of 'motivation', factualists once again face the Problem of Error Cases. Recall that factualists and non-factualists do not provide a satisfactory account of reason explanations. As I have argued (§5), this is due to their insistence that the *explanans* in reason explanations is constituted entirely by the (putative) fact that guided the agent's action. It commits them either to claiming that falsehoods can constitute the *explanans* in explanations, or to assimilating motivating reasons too closely with normative reasons. The latter commitment, in turn, comes with a host of implausible upshots. What we have seen now is that the factualist account of 'motivation' in fact simply boils down to the idea that motivating reasons can *explain* actions. What it means for A to be guided by r in ϕ ing is simply for r to explain their ϕ ing. The problem, however, is that factualists and non-factualists can decidedly *not* provide a plausible account of how motivating reasons as non-mental entities can reason explain actions. Hence, not only do factualists no offer the phenomenologically real account of acting for a reason they promise, their account of 'motivation' actually runs into the same problem their account of reason explanation has.

§ 6.3 Transparency and First-Personal Explanations

To conclude, consider a final rejoinder on behalf of the factualist. The factualist's Argument from Guidance failed, but it failed instructively. [*Favor*] was insufficient to define motivating reasons, and [*Light*] turned out to be a purely explanatory notion. These insights naturally lead to the following suggestion. The Argument is not actually backed by what it is like to consider motivating reasons *prior to* and *in* acting at all. There simply is no phenomenology of thinking about our motivating reasons *prior to* acting because those reasons are not yet determinate until we *have acted*. Rather, the Argument is supported by what one seems to consider in *explaining* one's action from the agential perspective.

In other words, [*guidance*] is grounded in the phenomenology of *explaining* one's action in terms of one's motivating reasons. It is about what it is like for me to consider my reasons for ϕ ing in explaining why I ϕ ed. Call such explanations *first-personal explanations*.

This reading has plausible upshots. As I have already alluded to earlier, Phil the anti-vegan would not consider the fact that the dish was vegan as his motivating reason. We can now appreciate that this is *because* this fact cannot explain his action — he would never act for *that* reason. This is so even if Phil acknowledged this fact to favor his ordering that dish prior to ordering it. Similarly, in considering my motivating reasons for *having brought* an umbrella, I take myself to consider the relevant facts I took to be bearing on the situation. So what it is like to consider motivating reasons is still just what it is like to consider facts. The context that prompts my considering them is just a slightly different one.

Moreover, it still creates the same problem for Humeans. If motivating reasons were mental states, then it should seem to us as if we considered our beliefs and desires in answering the question 'Why?' — but it doesn't. We at least sometimes take ourselves to consider facts that we took to favor ϕ ing. Hence, Humeanism cannot account for the phenomenology of thinking about our motivating reasons in all cases of first-personal explanations.

However, there is reason to doubt that the phenomenology of considering mental states is clearly distinct from that of considering facts in the context of first-personal explanation. This is because our mental life is plausibly *transparent* to us in certain

contexts.³² For a mental state to be transparent just means that we do not consider the mental state itself in considering whether we are in it. Rather, we ‘look through’ the mental state, as it were, towards the facts that favor being in it.

Take Byrne’s (2018) theory as a case in point. His account of self-knowledge of one’s desires, for instance, is built around a principle he calls DES: “If ϕ ing is a desirable option, believe that you want to ϕ ” (2018, 161). The idea is that in considering whether you desire to ϕ , you consider the “considerations that count in favor” of ϕ ing (Byrne 2018, 158). In inquiring about your desire to ϕ , that is, you just ascertain what you take to be the facts that favor ϕ ing. If the facts tell you that ϕ ing is desirable, then believe that you want to ϕ . So in considering whether I desire to ϕ , I actually consider the facts I take to favor ϕ ing.

His principle for knowing one’s beliefs (BEL) works analogously: “If p , believe that you believe that p ” (Byrne 2018, 102). If you want to answer the question whether you believe that p , you just consider the relevant facts. This time, it won’t be the facts that favor ϕ ing, but the facts that favor believing that p . So in either case, we consider facts in considering our mental states.

The point is this: if DES and BEL are ways for us to consider our mental states, then what it is like to think about our beliefs and desires is just what it is like to think about facts. The phenomenology of considering mental states is, in certain contexts, identical to that of considering facts. Both in considering our beliefs and our desires, we consider what we deem to be the relevant facts bearing on the question at hand. What the Humean may thus argue is, in effect, that the question ‘Why?’ (Anscombe 1957) that prompts *first-personal explanations* is one of those questions that prompts our consideration of our beliefs and desires via the facts we took to favor having them.

So here is a plausible story the Humean may tell. Suppose you ask me why I brought the umbrella. You are, in part, asking me to make my bringing an umbrella intelligible to you (Anscombe 1957). Now, a very clear way of making myself intelligible is by informing you about my goals and how I thought bringing the umbrella would achieve them. So in pondering your question, I consider my desires and beliefs at the time by way of considering the facts that seemed to me to favor having them. Moreover, it is these facts that I mention in my reply, hoping that “[you] see, at least in essential outline, how to construct [my] primary reason” (Davidson 1963, 686). So considering and

³² See Evans (1982), Moran (2001), and Byrne (2005; 2018).

mentioning facts in this context is really just a stand-in for what we actually consider, namely, our beliefs and desires. The latter constitute our motivating reasons, the former the object of our thought in considering them. If my previous arguments against factualist and non-factualist positions are plausible as well, then Humeans in fact have the better account of motivating reasons in every respect.

§7 CONCLUSION

The apparent problem with Humeanism is, in part, that it only theorizes action from the perspective of the observer. In other words, Humeans seem to only account for “the kind of representation that is ‘of’ action in the objective sense that it is characteristic of someone who is *thinking about action*” (Ford 2017, 223). The apparent strength of factualism and non-factualism, in turn, lies in their supposed incorporation of the agent’s perspective into their account of motivating reasons, and thus into their theory of action. Factualists and non-factualists thus promise not only to account for “the kind of representation that is ‘of’ action in the subjective sense that it is characteristic of someone who is *performing an action*, [but even for] the unity of these representations” (Ford 2017, 223). The aim of my thesis was to show that this is not true. Not only do factualists fail to account for the agent’s perspective, they thereby even face a pervasive problem for their explanation of action. Humeans, on the other hand, are uniquely well-equipped to explain actions *and* can account for what it is like to consider one’s motivating reasons from the perspective of first-personal explanations. Hence, I conclude, we have good reasons to remain Humean for our account of motivating reasons and reason explanations. Let me briefly summarize each section to see why.

§ 2 *Three Roles of Reasons*

The second chapter was dedicated to laying out the three roles reasons are typically held to play in the contemporary literature. Normative reasons are facts that objectively favor some response. Explanatory reasons are facts that constitute cooperative answers to questions regarding some phenomenon. Finally, motivating reasons are reasons that (i) motivate and (ii) reason-explain agents’ actions. Reason explanations, in turn, are explanations of actions where the *explanans* is (partly) constituted by the agent’s motivating reason. The rest of the chapters were structured by this definition of motivating reasons:

- [MR]: r is A ’s motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
- (i) r motivates A to ϕ , and
 - (ii) r reason-explains A ’s ϕ ing

§ 3 *How Motivating Reasons Motivate*

I have argued that the current debate regarding motivating reasons is best understood in terms of the exact meaning we should assign to (i) and (ii). The second chapter was thus dedicated to outlining the two most important contenders for accounts of what it means for motivating reasons to ‘motivate’ actions. Humeans argue that motivating reasons are belief-desire pairs that ‘motivate’ action in the sense of causing them. These are their most important arguments for this conclusion, as I have reconstructed them:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| [psyche] | (i) Belief-desire pairs are our motivating states. |
| | (ii) Motivating states, and only motivating states, motivate agents. |
| | (iii) Motivating reasons motivate agents. |
| | <hr/> |
| | (C) Hence, belief-desire pairs are motivating reasons |
|
 | |
| [causal] | (i) Belief-desire pairs are our motivating states. |
| | (ii) Motivating states are our motivating reasons. |
| | (iii) Motivating states, and only motivating states, <i>cause</i> actions. |
| | <hr/> |
| | (C) Hence, motivating reasons <i>cause</i> actions. |

Humeans thus quite elegantly move from a theory of mind to a conclusion about the nature of motivating reasons *via* their essential motivational function, where ‘motivation’ is understood in causal terms.

Factualists and non-factualists object to this account. In line with Anton Ford’s (2017) methodological challenge for action theorists, they argue that motivating reasons play a particular first-personal function from the perspective of the agent. Accordingly, any reasonable account of motivating reasons must live up to their first-personal relevance. From this perspective, they argue, motivating reasons seem to us to be normative reasons that *guide* our actions. What it means for motivating reasons to ‘motivate’ action is for them to *guide* it:

- [*guidance*] (i) r motivates A 's ϕ ing as their reason iff
 [*Favor*] ... r seems to A to favor ϕ ing, and
 [*Light*] ... A ϕ s in the light of r .
- (ii) Only (putative) facts can seem to one to favor ϕ ing.
 (iii) One can only ϕ in the light of (putative) facts.
-
- (C) So, only (putative) facts can motivate A 's ϕ ing as their reason.

Finally, I argued that there is a hybrid position. This Dretskean account acknowledges the factualists' *guidance* sense of 'motivation', while at the same time maintaining that the *explanans* in reason explanations is constituted by the agent's mental states. I used this to show that the question regarding motivating reasons' motivational function is a *separate* issue from their explanatory function. As such, they can be theorized separately. This then motivated my turning to motivating reasons' explanatory function according to Humean and factualist positions. For completeness, here are the three definitions of motivating reasons we have at this point adduced:

- [*MR_H*]: r is A 's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
 (i) r (non-deviantly) *causes* A to ϕ , and
 (ii) r *reason-explains* A 's ϕ ing
- [*MR_F*]: r is A 's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
 (i) r *guides* A 's ϕ ing in the sense that
 [*Favor*] ... r seems to A to favor ϕ ing, and
 [*Light*] ... A ϕ s in the light of r , and
 (ii) r *reason-explains* A 's ϕ ing
- [*MR_D*]: r is A 's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
 (i) r *guides* A 's ϕ ing in the sense that
 [*Favor*] ... r seems to A to favor ϕ ing, and
 [*Light*] ... A ϕ s in the light of r , and
 (ii) r is embedded in a belief-desire pair that *reason-explains* A 's ϕ ing

§ 4 Reason Explanations

The fourth chapter was thus dedicated to laying out the Humean and the factualist account of *reason explanations*, respectively. Again, this amounts to our investigating

condition (ii) of motivating reasons. First, Humeans argue that reason explanations are a species of causal explanations (i.e. *rationalizations* in Davidson's (1963) sense). Moreover, I presented an argument for the indispensability of agents' mental states in reason explanations based on Smith's (1994) remarks:

- [*perspective*] (i) Reason explanations involve *A*'s reason *r* for ϕ ing
(ii) If *A* ϕ 's for reason *r*, then *r* can explain *A*'s ϕ ing
(iii) If *r* can explain *A*'s action, then *r* is manifested in *A*'s perspective

(C) Hence, reason explanations *constitutively* involve *A*'s perspective

I have then identified how factualists and non-factualists seem to challenge this argument. In effect, they object to the move from the necessity claim in (iii) to a constitutive account of mental states in reason explanations. While mental states may be necessary for the agent to act, they argue, this does not suffice to show that they are part of the *explanans* in reason explanations, rather than mere *enabling conditions* for such explanations:

- [*enabling*] (i) Reason explanations involve *A*'s reason *r* for ϕ ing
(ii) If *A* ϕ 's for reason *r*, then *r* can explain *A*'s ϕ ing
(iii) If *r* can explain *A*'s action, then *r* is manifested in *A*'s perspective

(C*) Reason explanations involve *A*'s *r* for ϕ ing,
as manifested in *A*'s perspective

So, I argued, the factualists' and non-factualists' challenge to Humeans amounts to the following. In order to account for the agent's perspective on their action, we must theorize motivating reasons as they appear from the agent's point of view *prior to* and *in* acting. From this point of view, we have good reason to believe that motivating reasons appear to agents as facts, rather than mental states. Moreover, mental states are not plausibly part of the *explanans* in reason explanations either. Hence, both functions of motivating reasons (viz. to *motivate* and *explain* action) are plausibly played by facts, rather than mental states. Hence, factualists and non-factualists seemed to provide not just a plausible account of motivating reasons — they also did so in a way that united the agent's with the observer's perspective on action by accounting for the motivational function of reasons in first-personal terms, and the explanation thereof in third-personal terms.

§ 5 *Solving the Problem of Error Cases*

With this chapter began the critical part of this thesis. My overall argument is that factualists and non-factualists cannot properly account for either aspect of motivating reasons in the perspective-unifying way they promise. First, they run into a pervasive problem in accounting for *reasons explanations*, condition (ii) of our analysis of motivating reasons.

To argue for this, I have first established to plausible desiderata for any account of motivating reasons and reason explanations:

[*no falsehood*] Falsehoods cannot explain.

[*no normative*] We can act for motivating reasons that are no normative reasons.

I have then shown that factualists fail to live up to [*no normative*], while non-factualists cannot avoid [*no falsehood*] precisely because of their *non-factual* account of motivating reasons. They run into these problems because they must solve a problem that is directly implied by their arguments [*guidance*] and [*enabling*]:

- [**error**]
- (i) Only facts and falsehoods can motivate *A*'s ϕ ing as their reason *r*.
 - (ii) If *A* ϕ 's for reason *r*, then *r* all by itself can *r-explain* *A*'s ϕ ing.
-
- (C) Only facts and falsehoods can all by themselves *r-explain* *A*'s ϕ ing.

In order to solve this problem, factualists give up on [*no normative*] by stipulating away the possibility to act for a reason that is not true. Non-factualists, on the other hand, concede the argument and simply deny [*no falsehood*] in doing so. As such, both answers are problematic on some dimension and we have good reason to look for a better solution.

I thus argued that Humeans simply do not encounter the Problem of Error Cases. This is precisely because they allow for mental states to enter into the full *explanans* in reason explanations. Hence, we have good reasons to be Humean in our account of reason explanations. In other words, at least the second condition for our analysis of motivating reasons should have a Humean reading. At least, that is, we must adopt the Drestkean account of motivating reasons:

- [*MR_D*]: r is A 's motivating reason for ϕ ing iff
- (i) r guides A 's ϕ ing in the sense that
 - [*Favor*] ... r seems to A to favor ϕ ing, and
 - [*Light*] ... A ϕ s in the light of r , and
 - (ii) r is embedded in a belief-desire pair that *reason-explains* A 's ϕ ing

§ 6 *The Argument From Guidance Reconsidered*

In the final chapter, I have then argued that we in fact have no good reason to accept the *guidance* reading of 'motivation' either. The overall point is that factualists' and non-factualists' phenomenological motivation for their account of motivating reasons does not hold water. First, considering one's motivating reasons for ϕ ing prior to acting is not identical to considering facts one takes to favor ϕ ing. Hence, factualists cannot rely on the phenomenology of considering facts one takes to favor ϕ ing to argue for what it is like to consider one's motivating reasons. Second, despite the initial plausibility of the phenomenological reality of acting 'in the light of' some fact, factualists in fact provide no phenomenological upshot for this notion at all. Hence, factualists cannot rely on the supposed phenomenology of considering motivating reasons either *prior to* or *in* acting to support their account. This means the *guiding* sense of 'motivation' for motivating reasons is, in fact, unmotivated. Absent further arguments, we have no good reason to accept that motivating reasons motivate action in the sense that they guide them.

Finally, I sketched a possible solution to a tenable version of their argument on behalf of the Humean. By embracing transparency accounts of mental states, the Humean may be able to account for why the phenomenology of considering one's reasons is sometimes that of considering facts in the context of first-personal explanations. My proposed solution clearly needs more careful scrutiny. For one, it is not clear that considering whether I believe that p is identical to considering my belief that p . For another, Byrne wants to analyze self-knowledge, not the act of arriving at it. These are questions the Humean would need to answer. For now, I hope this suffices to show that the Humean is able to live up to the potential phenomenological reality of considering one's own reasons, all the while maintaining that these reasons are constituted by one's mental states, thus avoiding the notorious Problem of Error Cases. Hence, I conclude, we have good reasons to remain Humean for our account of motivating reasons and reason explanations.

So where does that leave us? I believe that Ford (2017) is right — our best theory of action must be capable of accounting for the agent’s perspective on action. Factualists and non-factualists seemed to be particularly well-suited to live up to this ideal. As I have argued, however, this isn’t so. They neither provide a satisfactory account of reason explanations, nor of what it is like to act for a reason. Moreover, Humeans are doing just as well in theorizing the phenomenology of considering one’s own motivating reasons. What’s more, they even provide a quite satisfactory account of reason explanations. As such, I believe that are well-advised to look further into how we can expand upon Humean accounts of action. Moreover, I believe that the expansion should ideally be such that it makes sense of the intuitive appeal behind the factualists’ *guidance* notion of motivation.

I thus suggest we look into Wu’s (2023) account of attention in action. He argues that a “causal theory of action should reveal to us the *psychology* of agency, what the psychological components of agency are. These components give us *the agent’s perspective* on and in action” (Wu 2023, 83; emphases mine). Wu thus takes a roughly Humean approach to the explanation of action, while aiming to also account for the agent’s own view on it. The agent’s perspective, according to Wu, is directed at salient features in their environment, based upon their intentions. As such, “visual input constitutes visual attention when it plays the functional role of *guiding* response” (Wu 2023, 75; my emphasis). The idea is that our intentions bias our perception of our environment for features that are relevant for the intended action, features that thus guide our actions. Wu does not talk about motivating reasons in this context, but it seems to me a quite promising start for a theory of motivating reasons. Not only could we get a Humean account of reason explanation through this, but we could also account for the precise sense in which our reasons plausibly guide our actions.

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