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**Are reasons for action
agent's psychological states or facts of the world?**

Bachelor Thesis

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1. Introduction

Most human actions can be explained in terms of reasons. To explain why I did something I will normally be able to give my reasons that I had in favour of so acting at the time of acting. There will typically be a reason or reasons that motivated me to do what I did. I can also have reasons why I should do something, for example moral reasons, and these reasons ought to be capable of becoming my reasons for which I actually do something.

In my thesis I will explore what it means to act for a reason and what kind of entities reasons are. The main current dispute on the nature of reasons is that between the psychologist view and the factualist view. The first states that actions should be explained in terms of the agent's psychological states such as beliefs and desires and the latter is a position that actions should be explained in terms of facts of the world. To shortly illustrate the essential difference between these two positions (without yet having any specific theories in mind) let us imagine that I will paint my room. According to the psychologist view my reason for this action would be some mental state or a combination of mental states of mine. It could be that I desire a freshly painted room and I believe that certain actions like buying paint and painting the wall will help me achieve what I desire. Or I might believe that the room should be painted (my belief) and this belief brings about a desire to buy some paint and paint the walls. On the factualist view my reason could be that the wall needs a fresh coat of paint or that the old colour of the wall is too boring (a fact), but not my being in a mental state. According to factualism mental states can be reasons for action only in rare cases and only as facts (the fact that I believe something, but not being in the state of believing). When asked to explain why I just painted my wall, I would not respond that I believed that the wall looked boring before or that I desired to paint the wall. Rather I would say that my reason was that the wall looked boring. I will discuss what speaks in favour of either view and what conclusions about normative and motivating reasons follow from them.

The question about the nature of reasons is a fascinating and fundamental question about the structure of human motivation and actions. So one of my main interests is a theoretical one: how we can explain why someone did what she did, what does it mean to have reasons and how reasons belong to agents. A second and more practical question is about how reasons why I should act can be reasons why I do act.

In section 2 I will define the main concepts of reason theory which will be used in my thesis and I will give a short overview of the essential idea of the psychologist and the factualist theory of reasons. The main discussion in my thesis is divided into two sections: in section 3 I

will analyze competing psychologist theories of reasons and in section 4 I will analyze the factualist theory of reasons. In section 3.1 I will discuss the desire-based psychologist theory of reasons and in sections 3.2 and 3.3 I will show how it has been opposed to within the psychologist tradition. In section 3.4 I will discuss Donald Davidson's view that reasons (which are psychological states of the agent) must explain actions causally as well as rationally. Finally, in the last section of psychologism, I will analyze Thomas Nagel's theory of reasons and will argue that it should be understood as a hybrid view rather than as a psychologist view of reasons as has been suggested by some philosophers, including Eric Wiland in his book "Reasons". In section 4.1 I am going to reconstruct Jonathan Dancy's factualist theory. I will consider its possible advantages over psychologism and its characteristic possible shortcomings as pointed out by the supporters of psychologism. In section 4.2 I will discuss Michael Smith's arguments against factualism and Dancy's reply to his criticism. In section 5 I will compare Dancy's factualism with Nagel's hybrid view and analyze the role of mental states in the factualist picture of reasons.

I will defend the factualist view and show that being in mental states does not play the role of reasons in the explanation of actions. Instead mental states should be understood as enabling conditions for having motivating reasons for acting or in some cases as facts in the light of which we act. I will argue that the factualist framework of reasons allows mental states to be our reasons as facts more often than it has been argued by Jonathan Dancy whose theory of factualism will be the basis of my discussion of factualism.

Eventually, I would like to thank my supervisor Francesco Orsi, whose recommendations on the choice of literature were of great help and with whom I had discussions during the process of writing my thesis that were especially inspiring and constructive.

2. Definitions

In this section I will explain the key concepts of theories of reasons as used in my thesis. I will also give a short and general overview of the essential ideas that factualism and psychologism are based on. All defined concepts are typed in italics.

Two sorts of reasons can be distinguished: *motivating reasons* and *normative, i.e. good reasons*. The first kind of reasons are to be understood in the sense of reasons why someone acted as she did: what were the agent's reasons at the time of acting for so acting. Motivating reasons are explanatory reasons. When I write about motivating reasons I am referring to agent's reasons only. We can also say that the reason why someone so acted was that she was shy or that she was tired, which are not the reasons *in the light of which* one could act and therefore not the agent's reasons. Although they also explain actions, they can rather be understood as causes. *Normative reasons* (which I will also refer to as *good reasons*) are reasons the agent has in favour of acting (even if she is unaware of having these reasons), they justify action. Normative reasons make sense of claims that someone should act in one way or another. In Dancy's picture, (which I will discuss in sect. 4.1) these reasons are not different in kind. So-called Humeans (defenders of a psychologist view, discussed in sect. 3.1, which is known as the Humean view although it is not necessarily one that Hume advocated) also believe that normative and motivating reasons are constituted by the same sort of thing – namely desires. The *unificationist* models of reasons claim that normative and motivating reasons are the same kind of entities. *Separationist* models, on the other hand, understand normative reasons and motivating reasons as different kind of entities. So unificationists are either psychologists or factualists about both reasons, while separationists can be psychologists (or defend a mix of psychologism and factualism) about one sort of reasons and be factualists about other sort of reasons.

A successful theory of reasons should meet three constraints: explanatory constraint, normative constraint and ownership constraint. The *explanatory constraint* is that a successful theory of reasons should show how reasons explain actions they are reasons for. The *normative constraint* requires that a theory of reasons must be able to explain how reasons that justify our actions can be our motivating reasons. This constraint is that a theory of reasons must show how reasons why we should do something can also be the reasons why we actually do it, i.e. it should show how normative reasons can be motivating reasons. The

ownership constraint is that a theory of reasons should describe how reasons belong to the person whose reasons they are.

The psychologist theory of reasons is the view that reasons are, or are grounded in, our mental states. We have truth-apt mental states and non-truth-apt mental states. Our beliefs relate to the world by representing the world as it is. Beliefs can be either true or false depending on what is true or false of the world they represent. Desires are directed at changing the way the world is. I will sometimes also use the term *pro-attitudes* which stands for any other mental states with the same direction of fit as desires such as yens, drives, hopes, etc. These attitudes should be distinguished from desires although they have the same direction of fit. For instance, I may desire things that I hope will not occur. I may desire to fall asleep and yet hope that I won't because I need to finish reading a book. According to certain philosophers, including Donald Davidson, also evaluative beliefs count as pro-attitudes. These also can be distinguished from desires: I may believe I should get some exercise without desiring to do it. But when I do get some exercise, my belief that I should might well play the role of a pro-attitude.

When I desire to have a blue balloon, my desire cannot be true or false depending on any actual state of affairs, while my beliefs can be true if they represent the world as it is, or false if they fail to do so. Desires and pro-attitudes either motivate or are states of being motivated. If I desire to get a blue balloon then I am motivated, at least to some extent, to do what is needed to get a blue balloon. I will use Nagel's distinction between *motivated* and *unmotivated* desires. The former are arrived at by rational deliberation or motivated by further desires, the latter simply come to us without any further beliefs or desires having brought them about.

According to all psychologist views our reasons are grounded in our psychological states but there is disagreement between defenders of psychologism about what role exactly desires and beliefs play in forming reasons and whether either sort of mental state is necessary or/ and sufficient for having a reason for action. Our actions can be explained in terms of our cognitive mental states alone (the belief-alone model) or some combination of cognitive and non-cognitive mental states.

According to *factualism*, there are grounds for thinking that psychologism in any form is incorrect. Regarding normative reasons, factualists generally point out that mental states do not normally provide good reasons. They may function as reasons in odd cases. For example if Byron believes that the government is spying on his every move without any considerable evidence, this does not give him a reason to hide from the mailman, but it does give him a

reason to seek help from a counselor. In this case his psychological state is the consideration in the light of which he should see a psychiatrist. Most reasons, however, are not like that. What typically justifies action is not our beliefs about the world but, if anything, what our beliefs are about. So in this view reasons are typically not psychological after all. Jonathan Dancy argues that the belief-alone model of psychologism fails to meet the normative constraint. Only facts can be normative and since beliefs (or being in the state of believing) are not facts they cannot be normative reasons. As regards desires as normative reasons, factualists generally rely on arguments against desire-based theories of reasons that may be common to non-desire-based (or anti-Humean) forms of psychologism.

3. Psychologism

3.1 The Humean view and arguments: desire-based theory of reasons

The most prominent form of psychologism is the so-called Humean or desire-based theory. This is not necessarily one that David Hume advocated but an interpretation and/or expansion of his analysis of human motivation. Thus the desire-based view is often referred to as the Humean view.

On this view beliefs are inert states that cannot by themselves motivate, so desire (or some other sentiment) is needed for the agent to be motivated to act. Beliefs and desires are mental states with different directions of fit. (Anscombe 1957: sect. 32; Smith 1987: 54) Beliefs have to fit with the world they represent, while the world has to fit with the desires. Beliefs are 'satisfied' (i.e. true) when they fit with the world, desires are satisfied when the world fits with them. In this sense, desire, but not belief, aims at changing the world. So according to Humeanism beliefs *alone* are wrong kind of things to explain action and therefore cannot be reasons for our actions. Desires alone cannot make sense of an action either and desire-based views of reasons don't usually argue that desires are reasons, rather they are necessary for having reasons. To explain an action a means-end belief is usually necessary. I may desire to have a cup of tea, but this alone does not explain why I put the teapot on stove. I need to believe that in order to get some tea, I have to boil water first. The Humean view is a psychologist explanation of action. My reason for boiling water is explained in terms of my desire to drink tea and my belief that I need boiled water for it (Davidson 1963: 686-687).

Those who defend the belief-desire model of explaining actions, argue that beliefs alone are not the kind of things that could explain action and thus all belief-alone models fail to meet the explanatory constraint. The supporters of belief-desire models usually argue that beliefs alone cannot motivate and thus cannot be our reasons for action. For example, I could have a belief that a certain school would provide me with good education but I must also care for good education to be motivated to study in named school. The Humean view is that desires motivate us and that, therefore, they play a necessary and more fundamental part in forming reasons, both motivating reasons and normative reasons.

Some critics of the Humean view, e.g. Dancy, argue that desire is the state of being motivated, and therefore desire cannot be the source of all motivation. Nagel distinguishes unmotivated and motivated desires and argues that some desires are motivated by something further (which

can but doesn't have to be always a further desire) and therefore sometimes we have reasons that are not desires.

The belief-desire model can also be criticized on the basis that it allows one to only have reasons for doing things that one already wants to do. If this is the case, however, it would appear impossible to say that there is reason for the agent to perform a courageous act if she doesn't happen to want to act courageously.

3.2 Pure cognitivism

Although Jonathan Dancy eventually rejects all forms of psychologism, he argues in his book "Moral Reasons" (1993) for cognitivism and suggests in his "Practical Reality" (2000) that the best form of psychologism is one that accepts only beliefs (and not desires) as reasons. He calls this view *pure cognitivism*. This theory is constructed to criticize Humeanism. Pure cognitivism is a view that desire can never be what motivates because desire *is* the state of being motivated. Therefore the desire itself also needs to be explained if we want to give a full explanation of an action. A pure cognitivist would say that instead we have two beliefs which together are capable of motivating and explain our motivated actions: a belief about how things are and a belief about how things would be if the action were successfully performed. Desires can be explained via such beliefs. When I desire to feed my friend's cat while he is on a vacation my desire can be explained by my several beliefs about how things are and how they would be if I fed the cat. Among my reason-giving beliefs about how things are could be that his cat cannot get any food by itself, that I like cats, that it is morally good and/or required to help one's friends and to take care of animals who are domesticated, etc. My beliefs about how things would be if I fed his cat, could be that the cat will be taken good care of, that I will enjoy taking care of the cat, and I will have done what is right and/or my duty. Together these beliefs make sense of my desire to feed the cat. My desire is not a reason why I feed my cat, instead my beliefs are reasons both to desire to feed the cat and to feed the cat. These two beliefs motivate both desire and action, because desire is the state of being motivated, desire itself does not motivate anything. (Dancy 2000: 13-14)

„Pure cognitivism [---] supposes that a complete motivating state can consist of nothing but cognitive states. It allows that, where there is motivation, there will be desire. But it understands the desire as the state of being motivated rather than as some part of what motivates.“ (Dancy 2000: 85)

However, there are some unmotivated desires that I simply have with no further reasons. In this case, according to Dancy, my action simply cannot be explained in terms of reasons. Strictly speaking, there was no reason to act, I was motivated to act without a reason. (When we explain actions in terms of reasons, we do not have in mind just any sort of motivation but ‘rational motivation’).

„Some desires, of course, cannot be explained. But if they cannot be explained, then neither can the action that, in desiring as we do, we are motivated to perform. If we cannot say why we want to do it, the fact that we want to do it offers nothing by way of explanation for the action.“ (Dancy 2000: 85)

Dancy reconstructs Michael Smith’s Humean view and argues that it does not show that desires are motivating reasons. To desire is (1) to have a desire and (2) (cases of unexplainable desires aside) it is to have a motivating reason, but it does not follow that desires are motivating reasons. For if the second claim is rephrased as „to desire is to be motivated by some conception of how things are“ it becomes clear that the desire can be further explained and is not itself the fundamental explanation of action. Here are the premises of Smith’s argument:

- (a) Having a motivating reason is having a goal.
- (b) Having a goal is being in a state with which the world must fit.
- (c) Being in a state with which the world must fit is desiring.

This does not bring us to a conclusion that desires are motivating reasons, but rather that having a motivating reason is desiring. (Dancy 2000: 91)

The pure cognitivist model, therefore, rejects the Humean picture of beliefs as inert mental states: beliefs are fit to get us into a state of motivatedness, i.e. a state of desire. On the other hand, it agrees, at least verbally, with the idea that desire is a necessary component of a complete explanation of action. Yet, only *what* we believe and *what* we want can be a motivating reason.

3.3 Motivated desires and unmotivated desires

Thomas Nagel's model of reasons also requires the rejection of the Humean picture. His model is more complicated and it can be understood as a separationist view. He seems to claim that our motivating reasons can be both psychologist and factualist, while our normative reasons are exclusively factualist (values). Nagel distinguishes between two sorts of desires: motivated and unmotivated desires. Motivated desires are arrived at by decision and after rational deliberation or motivated by further desires, unmotivated desires simply come to us without deliberation, although they can be explained. According to Nagel the claim that desire underlies every action is true only if desires are taken to include motivated as well as unmotivated desires. (Nagel 1978: 28)

My reason to act can be my unmotivated desire so to act. But my reason to act can also be the result of my rational deliberation and while desire is still present in this case (as the state of being motivated), the reason for my desire is the same as the reason for acting. Therefore the result of rational deliberation, namely a belief that I should act in a certain way, can be a reason for action. It might be argued that every reason still originates in a desire. My belief that I will get my BA degree in philosophy if I write my thesis, will motivate me to write it, but only if I already have a desire to get a degree in philosophy. The belief-desire model suggests that this is the case with all reasons, but Nagel argues that it can be different at least in case of some reasons, such as moral reasons.

He defends the validity of this statement by saying that sometimes action and the desire to perform that action can be motivated by the same reasons. Therefore the desire to perform the action obviously cannot always be among reasons for performing it. (Nagel 1978: 30)

Nagel also argues that we make a similar mistake when we take a logical consequence of a belief we already have to be a condition for having that very same belief. Nagel gives an example of using principles of logic: if someone draws conclusions in accordance with a principle of logic then it is appropriate to ascribe to him the belief that this principle is true. Both, his belief that this principle is true and his drawing conclusions in accordance with it, are explained by the same reason. (Nagel 1978: 31)

What Nagel seems to be saying is that if I have a reason to believe something, then that reason explains both why I believe something and why I believe that that was indeed a reason for believing it. Suppose I believe that p is true, and I also believe that if p is true, then q follows. On this basis, I come to believe that q is true. Now, it is also true that, if I reason this way, it is because I believe in the validity of my reasoning: I believe that, if one believes that p, and

also believes that if p then q, then she must also believe that q. But the fact that I have this belief about correct reasoning is not among my reasons for believing that q. Likewise, in the practical case, my (motivated) desire to do x when I do x must be there (or I wouldn't have done x), but is not among my reasons to do x. So, in cases like these, my belief or desire in question cannot be amongst my reasons. „Beliefs provide the material for theoretical reasoning, but finally there is something besides belief, namely reason, which underlies our inferences from one set of beliefs to another.“ (Nagel 1978: 31)

Nagel's first objection against the Humean view

He argues that a desire or belief is always present when reasons motivate or convince. However, the desire is not always behind the motivation or provide a reason for it and a belief is not always behind the conclusion or provide a reason for it.

„[---] desires are among the materials for practical reasoning, but ultimately something besides desire explains how reasons function“ (Nagel 78: 31).

Nagel draws the conclusion that reasons may have the capacity of motivating precisely because they are reasons and not because a motivationally influential factor is among their conditions of application. We don't have reasons because we have desires (and beliefs) but the other way round, we have (motivated) desires (and beliefs) because we have reasons or at least because we think we do.

„Some desires are themselves motivated by reasons. Those desires at any rate cannot be among the conditions of the reasons which motivate them. And since there may in principle be motivation without motivating desires, those reasons may be motivationally efficacious even without the presence of any further desires among their conditions.“ (Nagel 1978: 32)

Latter is the key claim against a Humean view, which defends the model of reasons where there is a further desire behind every belief that might motivate us to act. Nagel believes that there may be in principle motivation without motivating desires as conditions for being motivated. It could be begging the question against the Humeans by simply denying their fundamental claim. However, if Nagel could show that there are cases where there is no further desire behind motivation, except for the desire which is given rise by further beliefs or values that the agent has, then his argument would place the burden on Humeans.

Nagel's second objection against the Humean view:

The soft-drink machine example

Nagel claims that his position provides us with a better way of rendering the motivation of actions intelligible. Desire is always present, but sometimes (perhaps more often than not) not as a condition for being motivated but rather as a consequence of having reasons to act. To desire is not a necessary condition for being motivated in the sense that this mental state has to pre-exist for the agent to be motivated. It can pre-exist in the case of unmotivated desires but otherwise it is always present in the sense that it will exist as a state of being motivated as a consequence of having reasons for action.

My wanting to feed a dime to a soft-drink machine is motivated by my thirst. Thirst can be seen as It is an *unmotivated* desire to drink. I need not rationally deliberate to arrive at the conclusion that I want to drink, nor to generate such a desire. (I am not saying that any desire to drink must be an unmotivated desire. I may desire to drink because the doctor told me to drink more: in this case it would be a motivated desire to drink.) So my desire to feed the machine a dime is a motivated desire and my thirst is an unmotivated desire. In this case my action is explained in terms of a desire motivated by an unmotivated desire plus the information that feeding a soft-drink machine a dime will provide me with a can of soda. Nagel then shows that we should not conclude that desire always provides the agent with a reason or even that it motivates the action.

It is possible to imagine that thirst should *cause* me to want to put a dime into my pencil sharpener. My unmotivated desire D¹ causes me to have another desire D². However, Nagel claims that it would be obscure to say that *I have a reason* to do it, or even that thirst *motivates* me to do it. So according to Nagel, any desire-based theory renders intelligible some actions that are, in fact, not.

„[---] it is imaginable that thirst should cause me to want to put a dime in my pencil sharpener, but this would be an obscure compulsion or the product of malicious conditioning rather than a rational motivation. We should not say that thirst provided me with a *reason* to do such a thing, or even that thirst had motivated me to do it. A theory of motivation is defective if it renders intelligible behaviour which is not intelligible. If we explain the ordinary cases of adopting means to a desired end in terms of an additional desire or an extension of the original one, then we must allow a similar explanation for counter-rational cases. But the fact is that such devices do not produce adequate motivational explanations of deranged behaviour. And if they do not yield adequate explanations in the peculiar case, there is reason to believe that their analogues are not the basis of intelligibility in the normal case. “ (Nagel 1978: 34)

This argument places an argumentative burden on the defenders of Humean model. However, someone who defends a Humean view could argue that in this case it is not the thirst that is the fundamental desire and a reason for action. Instead it could simply be the agent's desire to put a dime into the pencil sharpener and this desire is her reason for doing so – surely not a good reason, but still an explanatory reason for her action. In this case Nagel's example would not force Humeans to render intelligible actions that are not. They do not have to adopt the view that thirst is the reason to put a dime into a pencil sharpener and could nevertheless claim that the reason is a desire or urge. It would not be a desire to drink, but a desire to put a dime into the pencil sharpener. An agent may be thirsty and then suddenly feel an urge to put a dime into the pencil sharpener but it does not prove that one desire gives rise to the other at all. And if it does cause the desire to put a dime into the pencil sharpener, it could still be argued that when I do put a dime into the sharpener my reason to do it is the desire I now have and not my thirst. Not any desire that might cause my desires and actions needs to be among my reasons for the action, though it might help explain the action in non-rational terms.

Nagel suggests a different explanation. He draws a distinction between actions that are *caused* and actions that are *rationally motivated*. His argument can be reformulated as follows:

- (a) My desire D^2 is caused by my unmotivated desire D^1 .
- (b) My desire D^1 is not a reason why I have a desire D^2 , i.e. D^1 does not rationally motivate D^2 .

The relation between my thirst and my desire to put a dime into my pencil sharpener cannot be explained in terms of reasons but it can be explained in terms of causes. For Nagel there is a fundamental incompatibility between reasons and causes – a cause cannot be a reason. Next I will move onto Davidson who has argued the opposite: that reasons are, after all, just a one sort of causal explanations.

3.4 Davidson's view and arguments: reasons as causal explanations

Davidson argues that although giving reasons why the agent acted is a rationalization of the action, rationalizations of this sort are simply a species of ordinary causal explanation.

Whenever someone does something for a reason, she can be described as:

- (1) having a pro-attitude of some sort (desires, wantings, urges, goals, values, etc) of the agent, and
- (2) a belief that the action is of that kind (Davidson 1963: 686).

From the agent's point of view there was, when he acted, something to be said for the action. Davidson argues that if explanations of actions are simply justifications but not causal then something essential is left out. Namely a person can have a reason to perform an action, i.e. a pro-attitude + belief complex, and actually perform the action and yet not for this reason but for another. For example, if I help my friend I might have a reason to do it both because I think it is morally good and because I enjoy helping my friends. If I do it because I enjoy helping others, the fact that it is also morally good does not have to be the reason why I help my friend, even though it is a reason I have to help a friend. Therefore, it is essential that if a given reason is to explain the action it must be the reason why the agent in fact so acted, instead of just being one of the reasons he had for so acting. Davidson concludes that we need the notion of causal explanation to make such a distinction: motivating reasons which explain an action must also cause the action. (Davidson 1963: 691)

According to Davidson, when we explain an action in terms of reasons, we are rationalizing the action from a third person's point of view. Although reasons must make some sense from the agent's point of view also, reasons must also explain the action as an event. They explain the action by giving causal explanation wherein the agent's psychological states are causes.

The paint-drinker's example

Davidson describes someone who has an urge to drink a can of paint. There is nothing good about drinking a can of paint even from the agent's point of view, she just has a yen to drink it. Davidson claims that this is enough to say that the agent has a *primary reason* for acting. The yen to drink paint and the action of drinking it make rational sense together, while thirst does not rationalize putting a dime into a pencil sharpener, unless I have a crazy belief that this will somehow slake my thirst. An unmotivated urge to put a dime into a pencil sharpener would be a motivating primary reason for putting a dime into the pencil sharpener, however. When we give a causal explanation, we are explaining an event. When we give a rational explanation, we are explaining a rational action. Davidson argues that when we give a rational explanation of the agent's action, we are also giving a causal explanation, because reasons are causes for actions. This is where his view diverges from Nagel's view, as Nagel denies this and argues that reasons and causes are different entities.

3.5 Nagel's view as a hybrid of factualism and psychologism

Eric Wiland suggests that Nagel's position should be viewed as a psychologist model of reasons because:

„It's important to see that while Nagel attempts to demonstrate that desires need not explain rational action, he often writes as though beliefs still do. Since he thinks that beliefs rationally motivate action, there is a sense in which he thinks that beliefs *are* reasons. That is, on Nagel's view, it makes perfect sense to say that the reason you are learning Italian now is that you believe that in six weeks you will be in Italy. And this makes it appropriate to view Nagel's view as a version of psychologism.“ (Wiland 2012: 85)

Dancy, however, seems to interpret Nagel's view rather as a factualist view:

„Nagel's claim, by contrast, was that if we explain actions by appeal to the beliefs and desires of the agent, we will have to abandon any suggestion that agents act for reasons. We explain an intentional action by specifying the reasons that motivated the agent. So Nagel is claiming that if we adopt psychologism, we might as well give up talking about acting for a reason altogether.“ (Dancy 2000: 98)

If desires are not really necessary for having a reason, the question arises whether beliefs, as psychological attitudes of another sort, are necessary either. Nagel discusses the cases of motivated desires using prudence and altruism as examples. He uses the term *prudence* as *future directed self-interest*. His aim is to attack the Humean view on the basis that it allows our future interests to give us a reason to act now only if we presently have a desire to further those interests. Nagel's argument can be reformulated as follows:

- (a) According to the Humean view future interests cannot provide us with good-reasons-now, unless we care about our future interests now (are motivated to take care of them now).
- (b) The agent cannot be motivated to take care of her future interests, unless she has presently a desire to do so.
- (c) If the agent has no desire to promote her future interests now, she wouldn't consequently have a reason to do so.
- (d) It would follow that the agent's future interests by themselves cannot provide reasons for her now.

This conclusion (d) is counterintuitive and Nagel rejects both (a) and (b). (Nagel 1978: pp. 39-46)

Consequently, if a person knew that she would desire her well-being in the future, this knowledge would provide her with no reasons to act in a way that would lead to her future

well-being, unless she had a desire to do so, now. Nagel argues that good reasons cannot be time-dependent in this way and if a person has reasons in the future they must count as reasons-now or must impose derivative reasons-now, as well. The person must be able to be motivated by those reasons, even if she has no desire to promote her future-interests now, or otherwise she is incapable of identifying with herself.

„[---] the influence of reasons can extend over time, because there is reason to promote that for which there is or will be a reason.[---] the influence of reasons is transmitted over time because reasons represent values which are not time-dependent.“ (Nagel 1978: 45- 46)

In the previous quotation Nagel clearly supports the view that at least some reasons are not the psychological states of the agent but values (factual entities). For Nagel, in case of moral reasons at least it seems that reasons are values of occurrences of some events and actions. So at least in the case of moral reasons, he does not seem to be saying that our reasons are our believings. Values are rather factual kind of entities.

„When a person accepts a reason for doing something he attaches value to its occurrence, a value which is either intrinsic or instrumental.“ (Nagel 1978: 35)

Nagel claims that reasons can be formulated as predicates. There is a reason for some act or event to occur, if the corresponding predicate applies to that act or event. If the predicate applies *primarily* to x-ing then it applies *derivatively* to any act which promotes x-ing. All such reasons for x-ing are *prima facie* reasons and it will also be possible to find *prima facie* reasons for not x-ing. (Nagel 1978: 47)

For example, such a predicate could be ‘... is in the interest of the agent’. „We have a reason to promote any event, actual or possible, if it is tenselessly true that at the time of that event, a reason-predicate applies to it.“ (Nagel 1978: 48) If there is a reason to promote something at time t, then this is true tenselessly, not only at time t. Nagel admits that the conditions which determine a given reason are not timeless, however, the values which reasons embody are still timeless, and can transmit their influence from future to past, once it is clear that the reason will be present. (Nagel 78: 55) The timelessness of reasons is explained by the consistency of an agent’s identity over time. If my future reasons were no reasons for me now unless I had a desire to promote my future interests now, it would imply that I fail to identify with myself. Because of the persistence of the identity over time, all our reasons are tenseless reasons and the reasons for our future-selves are reasons for us now. If I have a reason to know how to

Speak some Italian in six weeks, then I have a reason to study it now even if I have no desire to do so. The conception of oneself as a single individual over time makes our reasons timeless.

Nagel understands altruism as willingness to act in the interest of other persons, without the need of ulterior motives such as benevolence, sympathy, love, redirected self-interest, etc. They can be the source for motivation but there is also pure altruism, that can motivate people. (Nagel 78: 80) As Nagel states, we might have an intuition that,

„since it is I who am acting, even when I act in the interests of another, it must be an interest of mine which provides the impulse. If so, any convincing justification of apparently altruistic behaviour must appeal to what I want. [---] (i.e.) my belief that an act of mine will benefit someone else can motivate me only because I want his good, or else want something which involves it.“ (Nagel 1978: 80 – 81)

Nagel argues that desires to act in some way, that are necessarily present, must not be among conditions for the motivation but can be logical consequences of having reasons so to act, as shown before. He describes the structure of having reasons to act altruistically in the same way. The desire to act in the interests of others is rather a consequence of having a reason to act altruistically than a condition for altruistic actions.

„In so far as a desire must be present if I am motivated to act in the interest of another, it need not be a desire of the sort which can form the basis for a motivation. It may, instead, be a desire which is itself motivated by reasons which the other person's interests provide. And if that is so, it cannot be among the conditions for the presence of such reasons. Desire is not the only source of motivation. Therefore we may look for other internal factors which connect belief and action in the altruistic case.“ (Nagel 1978: 81)

As I see it, Nagel's treatment of prudence and altruism makes it clear that Nagel's theory of reasons cannot be purely psychologist. Instead it seems to be a mixed view (with a greater weight on factual reasons as I will argue in section 5). As I have shown in section 3.3 Nagel argues in his "Possibility of Altruism" that both beliefs and desires can sometimes be explained by something other than themselves and thus cannot be among the reasons why the agent acts. He argues that good moral reasons cannot be states of the agent, because one's desires and beliefs are explained by one's values. In this case agent's desires and beliefs exist as a consequence of having reasons.

4. Factualism

4.1 Jonathan Dancy's view and arguments

Jonathan Dancy defines reasons for human action in general as considerations in the light of which we act (Dancy 2000: 2). Those considerations are about contents of our beliefs (what is believed) and it must be some fact of the world that we consider as a reason to act in some way. Dancy argues that reasons for human action are not grounded in states of ourselves, whether desires or beliefs. He defends the realist view that,

„our reasons are given us by how things are and what is of value, not by (relations to) our beliefs and our desires. [...] reality is practical in the sense that good reasons are not grounded in psychological states of the agent, but in how things in fact are.“ (Dancy 2003: 423)

His view is that normative reasons are aspects of the situation, real features of things around us, and therefore motivating reasons must be at least capable of being the same sort of thing. (Dancy 2003: 425) Dancy distinguishes between motivating and good reasons but he does not see these as *different sorts* of reasons. We simply use one and the same notion of reason to answer two different kinds of questions: the question why the agent acted as she did and the question whether there was good reason for her so to act. Motivating reasons are the agent's reasons (reasons why), these reasons explain the action in terms of what there is to say in favour of the action from the agent's point of view. Normative reasons or good reasons (reasons for) make an action sensible, they justify an action. Sometimes we can have motivating reasons for an action while there are no good reasons for that action. If I have an urge to do something silly or irrational, there will be a motivating reason for me while it is not a good reason because it doesn't render my action sensible.

Dancy's argumentation as I understand it can be reconstructed as follows:

- (1) P's reason to help Q (good reason) is that Q is in trouble.
- (2) P's believing that Q is in trouble is not really a reason for P to help Q.
- (3) The reason why P actually helps Q (motivating reason) is that Q is in trouble, not a psychological attitude of P's.

„It seems to me, however, blatantly obvious that most of our moral duties are grounded in features of the situation, not in our beliefs about how things are. It is because she is in trouble that I ought to help her, not because I think that she is in trouble.“ (Dancy 2000: 52) and

„He believed that there was a rhinoceros before him, because there was one there; she believed that he needed her help because he did. So the reasons that favour an action can explain the reasons that explain the action.“ (Dancy 2000: 101)

The reason to take a medicine is that I am ill and the medicine cures me. (Not that I want to be cured or believe to be cured by the medicine). The reason why I go to the theatre tonight is that a play is performed. (Not that I want to see the play or believe that the play is performed).

„The believing, which of course occurs (though even this will be questioned), does not play the role of motivating reason; some other role must be found for it. Motivating reasons are what is believed; and some of the things believed are normative reasons as well.“ (Dancy 2000: 101)

The crumbly cliff example

Only rarely can our psychological states be our reasons. Dancy describes a *crumbly cliff case* Where the agent believes the cliff to be crumbly and his belief makes him nervous and therefore the nervousness caused by his belief makes it more likely that he might fall if he tried to climb it. So his believing is a reason why he should not climb the cliff regardless of the cliff's actual crumbliness. Dancy admits that in such a case the agent's belief really seems to be a reason for him to stay away from the crumbly cliff, but these circumstances are not common. And even then, the believing that the cliff is crumbly is not the reason, but the belief that the cliff is crumbly as a fact.

Rational and causal explanations of actions

Dancy also argues that all explanations can be given in terms of reasons. We can ask for reasons why the sun sets in the evening, although the sun itself cannot have any reasons for setting. This is something that in Nagel's terms would be a cause rather than a reason. Likewise, according to Nagel when there is nothing that would make my action rational from my point of view, it is caused and cannot be explained in terms of reasons.

While Nagel talks about causes that are not reasons, Dancy argues that causes are also explanatory and thus we can speak of them as reasons.

„We need not always suppose that the reasons we offer in explanation of why the agent did what he did are among what we have been calling „the agent's reasons“, or that the agent acted in the light of those reasons. Explaining in terms of the reasons that motivated the agent is a special case of explaining (giving the reason) why he acted as he did.“ (Dancy 2000: 131)

However, in case of human actions Dancy distinguishes between two sorts of explanations: rational and causal. The rational explanations explain actions by giving the agent's reasons for acting, the considerations that favoured the action or were taken to favour the action. They show the rationality of the agent's action. Causal explanation of an action is an explanation of a different sort, it explains the action in terms of psychological states but this explanation does not include the agent's reasons for acting and it is not supposed to show the rationality of the action like the rational explanation does. (Dancy 2003: 489)

What we are doing when we seem to give rational explanations of actions in terms of the agent's desires and beliefs is something completely different from when we give explanations in terms of reasons. For Dancy, reference to the agent's mental states does not explain the action in terms of the agent's reasons. It might cite causally relevant factors. In any case, it is a reference to entities that are themselves explainable in terms of reasons (desires), or at most are enabling conditions for something to be the agent's reason (if the fact that p was the agent's reason, then obviously the agent must have believed or been otherwise aware that p).

Why prefer factualism to psychologism

Factualism is designed to meet the normative constraint: my reasons are facts just like normative reasons are facts and that is why my reasons can be normative reasons. Motivating reasons are things that are believed and some of the things believed are normative reasons. The reason why we *should* act can also be the reason why we *do* act. Dancy calls this view the normative story. The psychologistic pure cognitivism on the other hand is what he calls a three-part story because of the way it is supposed to meet the normative constraint. Dancy suggests that in the pure cognitivist view reasons that explain the action (beliefs) are themselves sometimes explained by the reasons that favour an action. In this case *reasons why* someone acts can be explained by *reasons for* acting. The three-part story states that normative reasons cannot explain actions directly but they can do so indirectly. (1) normative reasons are facts, (2) motivating reasons are beliefs, and explain action, (3) motivating reasons are sometimes explained by normative reasons, so sometimes normative reasons indirectly explain action. (Dancy 2000: 101) That way the explanatory constraint is met by appeal to transitivity of explanation. However the normative constraint requires that motivating reasons could be the kind of entities that are also capable of being among reasons that favour an action, so cannot be met by the three-part story. The good reasons cannot directly be the reasons why the agent acts. So it renders it impossible to perform an action for the reasons that make it right. (Dancy 2000: 103) Dancy agrees that our psychological states are (normally) not the kind of

things that could make our actions right or wrong. My subjective believings cannot (normally) be reasons that make some actions right and others wrong.

Dancy argues that finally another argument that speaks in favour of factualism is that agents often see their reasons as facts and don't conceive of them in terms of their own psychological attitudes. Even though it could be true, this argument might be begging the question.

If I am painting my wall and I am asked why I am doing so, I would say, according to Dancy, that the old paint was bleached and flaking off and not that I believe it was bleached. This is because normally my *believing* that the wall is dull is not among those things that I take into consideration when I am thinking about what to do. Therefore the reason appears to be not my *believing* but *what I believe*.

Psychologist objection I: Ownership constraint

We might find it natural to adopt a psychologistic formulation of reasons because for anyone who does not want to see the play, the fact that it is performed is no reason to go to the theatre. And so it raises the question how reasons conceived as facts can be said to belong to the person whose reasons they are without the need to refer to that person's psychological states. If we did need the help of psychological states to show this, the full explanation would not consist of facts alone and the factualist theory would not work.

On the factualist view the reason why I take my umbrella when I am going outside is not that I believe it's raining. Instead, I would say that I am taking my umbrella because it is raining. Yet, it may seem that this explanation is not telling the whole story. For someone else who is much more excited by rainfalls than I am, the fact that it is raining could be a reason to run out and dance in the rain. Perhaps in my case it was heavy rain in autumn while in this other person's case it was a drizzle in summer and so on. It would seem that in either case it is true that it is a fact that is the reason for A-ing or B-ing, not my belief, but it seems that some of my beliefs and other facts determine whether it is indeed a reason for A-ing or whether it is a reason for B-ing. Dancy's reply to this would be that facts are simply reasons for different actions for different people in different circumstances. Reasons themselves are the facts in the light of which I do something. According to Dancy the fact that it rains outside can be the fact in the light of which I am motivated to go outside (if I like rain), but for someone else the fact that it rains can be the reason why he decides to take his umbrella or stay inside.

On the factualist view my believing is an enabling condition for having motivating reasons. A belief is what makes it possible for a reason to be *my* reason to act, if I am not aware of some fact that fact cannot be *my* reason to act, i.e. the reason that motivates me to do something. I

don't paint my wall because I believe it needs a fresh coat of paint, but my believing it enables the fact that the wall needs a fresh layer of paint to be a reason why I paint it. So I can have normative reasons for doing something without being aware of having such reasons, but I cannot have motivating reasons without being aware of it. If I don't believe that the wall needs to be painted although it does, then the fact that it actually does can be a reason for painting the wall, but it cannot explain why I paint the wall. It cannot be *my* reason for painting it. In this case I must have had a different reason for doing so, for example that I was asked to paint the wall (in which case my reason is the fact that I was asked to paint it not my believing it, even though surely I believe it if it is my reason). Yet even though the fact that the wall needs a new layer of paint can be a reason why I paint it only if I believe that it is the case that the wall needs a new layer of paint, it does not follow that my belief is a reason to do it. Instead my act of painting the wall can be explained as follows:

- (a) I have a reason to paint the wall (the fact that it needs a fresh layer of paint)
- (b) I have an enabling belief (which is not my reason)
- (c) and I am motivated by the reason (that the wall needs a fresh layer of paint), i.e. I am in the state of desiring to paint the wall which is explained by the reason I have.

Psychologist objection II: non-occurring facts

Another objection to factualism is that sometimes the facts believed do not occur and so they cannot be reasons for us. For example, I might have confused the dates and they are not performing a play tonight but I am going to the theatre because I believe they do. In this case it seems false to say that my reason for going to the theatre was the fact that they performed a play there. Dancy's reply is that the fact does not actually have to occur to be a reason. A psychologist theory could claim that my reason for going to the theatre was my belief that the play was performed and my desire to see it (though they did not perform the play). Dancy would claim that my reason was „a fact *as I believed*“ and so my reason is not my *believing* but *what I believe*.

„Still we can never deny that the agent believes that p, if we once explain his action by saying that he did it for the reason that p, as he supposes. Indeed, as I see it, the two sentences at issue:

His reason for doing it was that p, as he supposed

His reason for doing it was that he supposed that p

entail each other. [---] his belief that p is an enabling condition for his acting for the reason that p.“

(Dancy 2000: 130)

Dancy's response can be criticized on the basis that these two sentences do not entail each other, after all. In the first sentence the reason for action is that 'p, as I suppose' and in the second sentence the reason is that 'I suppose that p'. For example, the reason for some action could be that 'it rains, as I suppose' or that 'I suppose that it rains'. Dancy's claim that the two sentences entail one another can be criticized by indicating that if I suppose that it is raining, it is still possible that in fact it is not raining but if it is raining and I suppose that it is raining then it is not possible that it is actually not raining. If the two sentences do not entail each other the objection against factualism still stands. The facts which are supposed to be an agent's reasons, in cases where the agent is mistaken about the facts, do not obtain, so the agent cannot have acted for such a reason.

The latter objection seems to assume that the sentence "His reason for taking his umbrella was that it rained, as he supposed" ought to be read as "His reason for taking his umbrella was that it was raining and he supposed that it was raining". I disagree with this reading. As I understand it, on Dancy's view the first sentence reads as something like: "His reason for taking the umbrella was *what* he supposed and what he supposed was that it was raining", i.e. Dancy's 'p, as I suppose' does not entail that p is the case.

It is possible that what the agent supposes is that it rains and it does not rain, so the sentences can entail one another. What is supposed in this case refers to a non-obtaining states of affairs but Dancy argues that what we believe (the content of beliefs) is always the same sort of metaphysical 'beast', whether our beliefs are true or not: 'that p', in 'I believe that p', always refers to a state of affairs which is a factual entity.

4.2 Michael Smith's Humean view and objections to factualism

Michael Smith defends a Humean picture and objects separately to pure cognitivism and factualism. Smith interprets the argument of pure cognitivism as follows: „The belief that (say) something is desirable together with a belief about how to bring that desirable thing about can be what explains my action“ (M. Smith 2003: 461). Smith argues that beliefs might rationally explain desires, but this does not indicate that they motivate those desires (Smith 2003: 462).

As I pointed out in the section on pure cognitivism, Dancy rejects this criticism by claiming that he does not believe that the relation between beliefs and desires could be motivation. In

Dancy's view desire is the state of being motivated and it cannot be motivated itself. Belief is one's reason for being in the state of motivatedness, that is to desire, but it does not motivate one to be motivated. Dancy points out that it is even quite hard to understand what this could mean. As I understand pure cognitivism, he argues that beliefs motivate the action and to be motivated to act is to desire to act, beliefs explain why I desire to act and that is the same as to say that beliefs explain why one is motivated to act, and consequently why one acts. But this is so if pure cognitivism were true, which Dancy eventually rejects. In the end, Dancy denies that beliefs could be reasons either and argues that motivation is a relation that can occur between an agent and a consideration. Facts about the world are reasons that motivate us to act (while beliefs enable those facts to be reasons for us without being reasons themselves and desire is the state of being motivated by those considerations which is not a reason itself).

Smith continues by arguing that even if it were not the case that beliefs could be explanatory in the motivating sense (a view which Dancy argues that he does not want nor need to support as shown above), there are other reasons for rejecting Dancy's view.

Remember that for pure cognitivism, desires must themselves be explained by some appropriate pair of beliefs, or the action does not make rational sense. Thus desires cannot explain action, since they need to be explained as much as action does. Smith objects to this view. He claims that an action is always done for reasons (or otherwise it is not an intentional action but simply a happening). If we want to consider a doing that is motivated by inexplicable desires to be an action, there must be a reason and this reason, according to Smith, can only be a Humean belief-desire pair, for it is the only possible explanation left.

As Dancy has admitted himself, not all desires are motivated by beliefs, sometimes we simply find ourselves in such states, so if we want to explain actions motivated by these unexplicable states, desires must be reasons themselves in Smith's view.

In his reply to Smith Dancy suggests that actions which are not motivated by beliefs, which we just desire to do, i.e., we are just motivated to do, are rather *reactions* than actions, indeed. (Dancy 2003: 485) He sees nothing wrong in restricting what counts as action and argues that Humeans do it as well – for example when one stretches, she might do it almost unconsciously without any beliefs and only with a desire at best. In this case she does not seem to be acting for a reason in Humean terms either and Humeanism is also a 'constitutive' account of explanation of action, so anything that cannot be explained with the Humean model would not count as an action. (Dancy 2003: 484-485)

The third objection Smith makes is directed at Dancy's factualism and reasons understood as *considerations*. Smith refers to Dancy's crumbly cliff example and claims that Dancy is,

indeed, right that it is very rare that our considerations about our psychological states are the considerations that motivate us. Accordingly, if we adopt Dancy's view, the Davidsonian theory of motivating reasons appears to be committed to the claim that agents prevalently face circumstances that are relevantly similar to the example of the crumbly cliff. This does not seem likely in Dancy's view and therefore if we have accepted Dancy's definition of reasons, we should abandon a Davidsonian understanding of reasons. But Smith claims that the problem arises only if we accept Dancy's understanding of reasons as *considerations*. Smith argues that,

„Sometimes as when (say) we ask for the reason why the bridge collapsed, we use the term 'reason' to pick out not a *consideration*, but a *state*, specifically a state that figures in a suitable explanation, generally a causal explanation, of the occurrence in question. An alternative reading of the truism that we always act for reasons would thus be following: whenever an agent acts there is always some description of what he does under which what he does can be seen to be suitably explained, perhaps causally explained, by a particular kind of state.“
(Smith 2003: 465)

For each action there can be given some description under which the agent's action can be explained, perhaps causally, by a state (in case of actions the psychological state the agent is in). He concludes that if we adopt this view, Dancy's argument will collapse because the claim that the considerations that motivate us are not considerations about our own psychological states is simply irrelevant to the identification of motivating reasons with psychological states. (Smith 2003: 466)

Dancy's reply is that if psychologism is to be rejected as a theory of motivating reasons, it ceases to be a theory of motivation. If the question is not about what motivated the agent to act, it remains vague what other kind of explanation it should offer or what question this description can give an answer to. According to Dancy beliefs could only play the causal role, if they represent the light in which the agent acted and if we accept this view, then we are back in the reasons-explanation whether we want it or not. (Dancy 2000: 169)

5. Factualism as the most plausible account of reasons

5.1 Dancy's explicable desires and Nagel's motivated desires

I believe that the previously considered discussion has shown that we should disregard desire-based view of reasons. The main argument against desire being what (always) motivates is that desires themselves can be explained. We are left with two competing theories that both accept this much. In Dancy's view desires are always simply states of being motivated and the state of being motivated is exactly what needs to be explained when we explain actions in terms of reasons. Nagel has also defended the view that desires cannot always be our reasons: in cases where they can be explained by something else, they don't do the explaining but need to be explained. Nagel defends the view that unmotivated desires, however, count as motivating reasons. For Dancy there are no such things as motivated desires, motivatedness cannot be motivated. Dancy argues that if the agent has a desire which cannot be explained by any considerations in the light of which she would see so acting desirable, her action simply cannot be explained by reasons. We could say that while Nagel talks about motivated and unmotivated desires, Dancy talks about explicable desires and inexplicable desires. Nagel's unmotivated desires are essentially the same kind of entities as Dancy's inexplicable desires and Nagel's motivated desires are explicable, too, but Nagel believes (differently from Dancy) that they are explained by appeal to motivational relations between beliefs and desires. Dancy argues that the explanations we can give for having desires are not of motivational nature. In my opinion, Nagel's theory would not suffer much if it would drop the motivational nature of explanations. As shown above his motivated desires and unmotivated desires are compatible with Dancy's explicable and inexplicable desires. The burden of argumentation seems to lie on Nagel, though, if he wants to insist that these relations are motivational. However, Nagel's theory accepts that sometimes desire is present without being the reason (and so can beliefs be present without being the reason). I think that Dancy is right in questioning the claim that sometimes beliefs and desires as states that the agent is in are reasons while in case of normative reasons, they are not. Nagel argues that desires and beliefs are not always our reasons, but he does insist that sometimes they are. He argues that normative reasons are values as shown in section 3.4. When he introduces unmotivated and motivated desires, he does, indeed, seem to agree that psychological states can be motivating reasons if there is nothing further that explains them. An unmotivated desire can be a

motivating reason, and a belief can sometimes be my motivating reason when it explains the desires I have. However, Nagel has also argued that whenever our belief that *p* and having the belief that *p* is explained by something further, it cannot be the reason for action. It seems to me, that in case of motivating reasons, too, Nagel could agree that some of our reasons are facts that explain our beliefs which in turn bring about our desires. In my reading a significant amount of all motivating reasons I have must also be factual. Yet, because Nagel does not deny that sometimes our beliefs and desires can be reasons (if they cannot be explained by something else), his view is a mixed view. In my reading of Nagel facts should be our reasons more often than our psychological states: normative reasons are always facts and motivating reasons can be facts.

Dancy rejects the view that even some desires or beliefs are reasons because he does not want to accept that reasons can be different sorts of entities and we could sometimes act because of one kind of entities (desires, beliefs) and other times because of different kind of entities (values, facts). Dancy has admitted rare cases where the agent's reasons are her mental states (like in the crumbly cliff example), but only regarded as facts among others. In such cases the reason is the fact that I believe that the cliff is crumbly, not the state of believing this.

What Dancy and Nagel fight against is the idea that reality is not practical, that it is one's 'perspective' (desires or beliefs) that only makes sense of our acting for reasons, that acting for reasons is a fundamentally self-referential thing.

5.2 The premises of the factualist view

I believe that perhaps the most interesting objection made to Dancy's view is that it depends on its definition of reasons as *considerations in the light of which the agent acts*.

Dancy's position relies on two central premises: (a) reasons are considerations in the light of which we act and (b) desire is the state of being motivated (and it makes no sense to speak of motivating motivatedness). I have shown in my thesis that considerations are about facts and, thus, if we adopt (a) it seems very difficult (if possible at all) to deny the conclusion that so are reasons for actions. If we adopt (b) we must abandon Nagel's position, because there can be no such thing as motivated desires. Therefore, if we accept (a) and (b), Dancy's factualism seems to be the best account of reasons and if one wants to attack Dancy's view, I believe he or she would have to show why either of these premises should be rejected. Therefore, as

Nagel has to reject (b) when he speaks of unmotivated and motivated desires and (a) when he argues that unmotivated desires and beliefs (instead of what is believed) can sometimes be reasons, the burden of argument lies on him. However, I will go on to argue within Dancy's outline of what reasons are that our own mental states as facts can be our reasons for acting more often than Dancy seems to allow.

5.3 In what sense can agent's mental states be her reasons in the factualist framework?

If I see no reason to paint the walls of my room but desire to paint it nonetheless, then the desire to paint my room is inexplicable and so would be my painting it, as Dancy argues. I am in an inexplicable state of wanting to paint the walls. However, if I decide to paint it, then I think it could be said that my being motivated to paint the walls was the consideration in the light of which I decided to actually paint it. Because I do it in the light of just wanting to paint a wall, my reason is the fact that 'I want to paint a wall'. If I am an autonomous person who can resist her own desires, surely I could have decided not to paint the wall because there was no other reason but my wanting to paint it. If I decide to do it nevertheless, it is because I have considered the fact that I want to paint the wall as a sufficient reason to paint it. If the agent is unable to resist her desire or yea, she is caused to act and since it is not a rational action there can be no agent's reason for acting.

If such case makes sense, is Dancy's theory compatible with it? For example I may be reading a book that I have read many times before simply because I enjoy it so much. So I might explain why I am reading it by saying, "Well, I really like this book." Liking a book is a psychological state and it is also a good reason to do something. So it follows that my own temperament can be my reason to do something. I think it would not be accurate to say that in cases like these my reason is just the fact that it is an interesting book or a good book. I think it's more plausible to say that in cases like these at least one of my reasons to read the book is a fact about myself and my psychological states.

If what I have suggested is true, then Dancy's model could also regard inexplicably motivated doings as action, provided that such mental states are regarded as facts among other facts in the light of which the agent can act, rather than enjoying some special status in the explanation of action. It could be that there are simply two kinds of considerations in the light

of which we act – those about facts of the outside world and those about our own psychological states. I suppose that it is not so uncommon for people to see their own psychological states as reasons in the light of which they act. Especially when the reason is some subjective fact, e.g. ‘this orange tastes good’ or ‘reading is enjoyable’ we can consider our own mental states and feelings as reasons in the light of which we should do something.

5.4 The agent’s reasons and reasons why they are reasons for the agent

One of Dancy’s main arguments, as I see it, is that motivating reasons are something that the agents themselves would have to say about their actions. If the agent paints the wall, the reason why she does it, is not explained in terms of reasons someone else can see, but what the agent can see. So the agent’s explanation why she paints the wall would be something factual like, “the wall looked dull and faded before”. The view meets the ownership constraint by appeal to beliefs as enabling conditions for reasons to belong to the agent. A fact can be a reason the agent has because she also has an enabling belief that the fact obtains. But the belief itself is normally not the reason *for the agent* so to act.

The enabling role of a belief is something that could be reformulated as a reason of a different sort. I am able to speak because my vocal chords enable me to, i.e. the reason why I can speak is that I have vocal chords. So the reason why I can have motivating reasons is that I also have beliefs. We can distinguish between the agent’s reasons and the reasons why the agent can have the reasons she has. Facts alone do not do the job when we want to explain an action.

I agree with Smith in that when we talk about reasons we do not always have considerations in mind but I think that it is important to stress that usually, when we talk about beliefs and desires as reasons we see them as reasons why the agent could have agent’s reasons, they explain how reasons are the agent’s reasons. They are not reasons for which we act but reasons why we can have reasons to act. As shown in chapter 4.1 Dancy seems to accept the view that not all reasons are agent’s reasons, and for instance causes can also be reasons in the sense that they are explanatory. He argues that rational reasons in the light of which agents act is just one form of reasons, the sort that explain actions. So in the sense that beliefs explain how facts can be reasons for the agent, without being the agent’s reasons they are still reasons why the agent was able to respond to facts of the world. The psychologistic objection about

the ownership constraint points out an important link between the roles of psychological states – they show that we cannot give a full of explanation of how factual reasons could become the agent’s reasons without any appeal to that agent’s psychological states. Dancy agrees that beliefs must be present but not as agent’s reasons.

6. Conclusion

In my thesis I have analyzed how human actions can be explained in terms of reasons. I have discussed the psychologist view that reasons are agent's mental states, such as desires and beliefs, and the factualist view that reasons are facts of the world.

I examined the desire-based account of reasons according to which both motivating reasons and normative reasons are desire-belief pairs where desire is always a more basic component as beliefs alone are inert states and cannot be reasons for actions. I argued for the position that this view is deficient because usually agents have reasons for desiring something and, thus, their desires need to be explained in terms of reasons and cannot be among these reasons. I continued by analyzing the belief-alone model of reasons. In this view desires are never reasons and only beliefs can explain our actions in terms of reasons. We have two beliefs which together are capable of motivating and explain our actions: a belief about how things are and a belief about how things would be if the action were successfully performed. Desire is present whenever we are motivated to act, yet not among reasons but as a conclusion of having reasons to act. Reasons make sense of desiring something.

Both models, the desire-based model and the belief-alone model, are unificationist models: motivating reasons and good reasons are always the same kind of entities. Next I examined Nagel's view, which I interpreted as a hybrid view of factualism and psychologism. In my reading, Nagel argues that normative reasons are always facts and motivating reasons are sometimes mental states (unmotivated desires or beliefs) and sometimes facts in the light of which the agent has come to have her desires and beliefs.

Finally I discussed the factualist view that reasons are facts in the world and in rare cases our mental states can be facts in the light of which we act, but the states of believing or desiring are never reasons. I argued that if we accept Dancy's two premises about reasons: first that they are considerations in the light of which we act, and second that desire is the state of being motivated which itself cannot be motivated by anything else, factualism appears to be the best account of reasons. If we adopt these premises, we should consequently accept that desires cannot explain actions but need to be explained and that considerations are about facts, and therefore both motivating and normative reasons should also be. I argued that if we should find reasons why either of these premises is incorrect, the factualist theory might need to be reconsidered, otherwise, however, it seems to give a plausible account of reasons. I also argued that Nagel's view is substantially close to factualism as it defends the view that reality

can be practical and our reasons (at least normative reasons) can be facts. Nagel however speaks of beliefs and unmotivated desires as sometimes being our reasons, which requires him to reject that desires cannot be motivated and that reasons are always considerations. This lays the burden of argument on Nagel.

Dancy has been criticized for detaching reasons from agents to whom they belong. If reasons are facts in the world, it may seem impossible to explain how they can belong to agents. However, beliefs play exactly the role of enabling facts to be our reasons in Dancy's picture. I could not have a reason p to do q , unless I had the belief that p . Thus, beliefs are not the agent's reasons (apart from the rare cases when she acts in the light of the fact that she is in a certain mental state, her belief and not her believing). Yet, beliefs are reasons why agents can have reasons to act.

Dancy's view has also been objected to for allowing agents to act without reasons when they act intentionally but without being able to come up with any reasons why they are motivated to act as they do. Dancy accepts this and says that in this case their actions are, indeed, inexplicable in terms of reasons (because there simply are no facts in the light of which the agent acts and thus no reasons). I argued that in my reading Dancy can allow some inexplicable desires (as facts) to be reasons like he allows some beliefs (as facts) to be our reasons. For example, I might decide to go for a walk in the light of the fact that I have an inexplicable desire to have a walk. I also defended the view that sometimes, and more often than Dancy seems to allow, our own psychological states are the facts in the light of which we act. For example, I might read the same book for several times in the light of the fact that I like reading it.

In conclusion, I have defended the factualist account of reasons against psychologist accounts of reasons. I have shown that reasons should be understood as facts and that mental states are still included in the explanation of action but not as agent's reasons but as enabling conditions for having agent's reasons. Finally I have argued that our mental states can be the facts in the light of which we act in Dancy's framework more often than he seems to claim they are.

Kas tegude põhjused on toimija vaimsed seisundid või faktid?

Enamik inimeste tegusid on seletatavad põhjustega. Et seletada, miks ma midagi tegin, saan ma tavaliselt välja tuua põhjused, mis rääkisid mu teo kasuks selle teo sooritamise ajal. Sellised põhjused on minu motiveerivad põhjused. Lisaks saab rääkida põhjustest, miks ma midagi tegema peaksin, ehk normatiivsetest või headest põhjustest. Motiveerivad ja normatiivsed põhjused peaksid omavahel olema selliselt seotud, et põhjused millegi tegemiseks võiksid saada põhjusteks, miks ma tegelikult midagi teen.

Oma väitekirjas uurin, mida tähendab põhjusega toimimine ja millised entiteedid on põhjused. Praegune keskne vaidlus põhjuste olemuse osas toimub psühholoogilise põhjuste käsituse ja faktilise põhjuste käsituse vahel. Esimese vaate järgi on põhjused toimija psühholoogilised seisundid (nagu soovid ja uskumused) ja teise vaate järgi faktid maailmas. Et lühidalt nende kahe positsiooni erinevust illustreerida, kujutlegem olukorda, kus ma otsustan värvida üle oma toa seinad. Psühholoogilise põhjuste käsituse järgi saaks minu põhjus seda teha olla kas minu vaimne seisund või vaimsete seisundite kombinatsioon. Ma võin näiteks tahta värskelt värvitud tuba ja uskuda, et teatud teod, nagu värvi ostmine ja seinte värvimine, aitavad mul soovitud saada. Seljuhul on põhjuseks seinu värvida minu soov ja minu uskumus selle kohta, kuidas soovitud saavutada. Niisugune on näiteks niinimetatud Hume'ilik vaade, mis pole tingimata vaade, mida Hume pooldas, kuid on tõlgendus ja/või arendus tema motivatsiooni analüüsist. Selle vaate järgi on soovidel põhjuses alati fundamentaalsem roll kui uskumustel. Minu uskumused üksi on jõuetud – näiteks minu uskumus, et raamatute lugemine on hariv, saab olla põhjuseks raamatuid lugeda ainult siis, kui mul juba on soov end harida.

Teine psühholoogiline vaade tegudest võiks olla, et mul on uskumus, et mu toa seinad vajavad uut värvikorda ja minu uskumus tekitab minus soovi seinu värvida. Kui soovipõhises teooriates on põhjuses fundamentaalsem roll minu soovil, siis uskumusepõhises mudelites on minu uskumus see, mis muudab mõistlikuks soovida seinu värvida. Seega on niisuguse vaate järgi uskumus põhjuses fundamentaalsemas rollis (nt Nagel'i järgi on mõnede tegude põhjuseks uskumused, sest nendega on seletatavad meie motiveeritud soovid) või on uskumused üksi teo põhjused (puhta kognitivismi järgi, kus soovimine on mõistetud motiveeritud olekuna, mis ise pole kunagi põhjus, vaid on alati seletatav uskumuste kui põhjustega).

Faktilise põhjuste käsituse järgi pole põhjuseks ei minu soov ega minu uskumus, vaid fakt, et mu toa sein on luitunud ja vajab uut värvikorda. Viimase vaate järgi on põhjused kaalutlused, mille valgel toimija otsustab midagi teha. Kuna enamasti me ei arvesta põhjusena midagi teha iseenda uskumist, vaid seda, mida me usume, siis ei ole selle vaate järgi vaimsed seisundid toimija tegude põhjuseks.

Ma näitan oma väitekirjas, et soovipõhised teooriad on puudulikud, kuna toimija soovid on enamasti ise seletatavad uskumustega. Seetõttu ei piisa tegude seletamiseks toimija soovidele osutamisest, vaid teo seletamiseks on vajalik seletada, miks toimija soovis vastavalt toimida. Seejärel analüüsin ma ainult uskumustel põhinevat põhjuste teooriat ehk puhast kognitivismi, mille järgi soov ei ole kunagi osa põhjusest, vaid põhjus moodustub kaht tüüpi uskumustest: uskumustest selle kohta, kuidas asjad on, ja uskumustest selle kohta, kuidas need oleksid pärast mingi teo sooritamist. Näiteks on mul uskumused, et praegu on mu toa seinad luitunud ja uskumus, et mulle ei meeldi nende luitunud värv (uskumused selle kohta, kuidas asjad on) ning peale selle uskumus, et pärast seinte värvimist pole seinad enam tuhmid ja mu tuba näeb parem välja (uskumused selle kohta, kuidas asjad oleksid). Need uskumused koos muudavad mõistlikuks soovida värvida toa seinad üle. Nii soovidepõhise kui uskumustepõhise vaate põhjal on motiveerivad põhjused ja normatiivsed põhjused üht sorti entiteetidid.

Järgmiseks uurisin ma Thomas Nagel'i vaadet, mida ma tõlgendan kui faktilise ja psühholoogilise käsitluse hübriidi, kus normatiivsed ja motiveerivad põhjused ei ole alati sama tüüpi entiteetidid. Minu lugemisest lähtuvalt väidab Nagel, et normatiivsed põhjused on alati faktid (väärtused) ja motiveerivad põhjused on mõnikord toimija vaimsed seisundid (tema motiveerimata soovid ja tema uskumused) ja mõnikord faktid, mille valguses toimija on omandanud oma uskumused ja soovid.

Viimaks analüüsin ma faktilist põhjuste käsitust, mille järgi põhjused on alati faktid maailmas, mitte aga mõnes vaimses seisundis viibimine. Kuna selle vaate järgi on nii motiveerivad kui normatiivsed põhjused ühtviisi faktid, siis seletab see, kuidas põhjused, miks me midagi tegema peaksime (näiteks moraalsed põhjused), saavad saada põhjusteks, miks me tegelikult midagi teeme. Selle vaate kohaselt võivad erandlikel juhtudel olla meie tegude põhjusteks ka meie vaimsed seisundid, aga üksnes faktidena, mille valgel me otsustame midagi teha. Näiteks kui ma usun, et Eesti Post jälgib iga mu liigutust, ilma et mul oleks selleks mingeid tõendeid, siis ei ole see, mida ma usun, tõenäoliselt põhjus varjuda postiljoni eest, vaid pigem on fakt, et ma seda usun, põhjus, mille valgel ma peaksin otsima psühholoogilist nõustamist.

Ma kaitsen oma töös vaadet, et kui me võtame omaks Dancy kaks eeldust põhjuste kohta: esiteks, et need on kaalutlused, mille valgel me tegutseme, ja teiseks, et millegi soovimine on sama, mis olla motiveeritud ning ei saa seega ise millegi poolt motiveeritud olla, siis osutub faktiline põhjuste käsitus parimaks põhjuste seletuseks. Ma väitsin, et kui me leiame põhjuse, miks kumbki neist eeldustest osutub valeks, siis on ilmselt vajalik ka faktilist käsitust uuesti läbi vaadata. Kui me aga võtame omaks need eeldused, siis näib, et faktiline põhjuste käsitus pakub usutava seletuse sellest, millised entiteedid on põhjused. Ma väidan oma teesis samuti, et Nagel'i teooria on sisuliselt lähedane faktilisele põhjuste käsitusele, kuna kaitseb arusaama, et reaalsus võib olla praktiline, teisisõnu, et meie põhjused (või vähemalt normatiivsed põhjused) võivad olla faktid. Nagel väidab aga, et leidub ka motiveerimata soove kui põhjuseid ja motiveeritud soove, mispuhul vähemalt mõnikord on meie tegude põhjusteks uskumused. Seega peab Nagel tagasi lükkama mõlemad Dancy eeldused, nii tema väite, et soovid ei saa olla motiveeritud kui ka, et põhjused on alati kaalutlused. See seab argumenteerimiskoorma Nagel'ile.

Dancy'le on ette heidetud, et tema teooria lahutab põhjused toimijatest, kellele nad kuuluvad. Kui põhjused on faktid maailmas, võib tunduda võimatu näidata, kuidas nad inimestele kuuluvad. Dancy vaate järgi aga ongi uskumused need, mis võimaldavad põhjustel olla *minu* põhjused. Mul ei saaks olla põhjust p teha q , kui mul poleks uskumust, et p . Niisiis pole uskumused toimija põhjused (välja arvatud harvad juhused, kui need on faktid, mille valgel me otsustame midagi teha). Uskumused on seega põhjused, miks mul saavad olla motiveerivad põhjused. (Normatiivsed põhjused saavad mul muidugi olla, ilma et ma neist teadlik oleksin).

Dancy'it on kritiseeritud ka selle eest, et tema vaate kohaselt võivad inimesed intentsionaalselt tegutseda, ilma et nende tegevust saaks põhjustega seletada. Kui ma ei oska esitada ühtki põhjust, mille pärast ma tegin, mida ma tegin, peale selle, et ma lihtsalt tahtsin seda teha, siis peab Dancy vaate kohaselt ütlema, et mu teol polnud põhjust. Dancy nõustub sellega ja ütleb, et seljuhul ei olegi tegu toimija põhjustega seletatav. Oma teesis väidan ma, et Dancy teooria raamistik lubab tegelikult ka selliste tegude puhul rääkida põhjustest, sest mõnikord võivad meie enda soovid olla faktid, mille valgel me otsustame midagi teha. Minu seletamatu soov minna jalutama võib olla fakt, mille valgel ma otsustangi jalutuskäigu teha. Ma jätkan väitega, et kui ma loen mitmendat korda sama raamatut lihtsalt sellepärast, et ma naudin selle lugemist, võin ma oma tegu seletada, öeldes et: „Mulle väga meeldib see raamat.“ Meeldimine on aga vaimne seisund ja hea põhjus millegi tegemiseks. Sellest järeldub, et minu enda meeleolu võib olla põhjus, mille valgel ma midagi teha otsustan.

Väidan, et sellistel juhtudel poleks õige öelda, et mu põhjuseks oli üksnes fakt, et see on huvitav raamat või hea raamat. Usutavam on, et sarnastes olukordades on vähemalt üks mu põhjustest, mille valgel ma toimin, fakt minu enda ja minu vaimsete seisundite kohta.

Kokkuvõttes, kaitsen oma väitekirjas faktilist põhjuste käsitus psühholoogiliste põhjuste-teooriate vastu. Näitan, et põhjuseid tuleks mõista kui fakte, ja et toimija mõnes vaimses seisundis olemine kuulub tegude seletusse, kuid mitte põhjuse, vaid motiveerivate põhjuste omamist võimaldava seisundina. Lõpuks väidan ma, et faktiline põhjuste käsitus lubab, et meie vaimsed seisundid võivad faktidena olla meie tegude põhjused.

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