Metaethics and Theories of Motivation

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ABSTRACT
One of the central questions in recent philosophical debate is whether motivation to act comes from cognitive or non-cognitive mental states. This question clearly is distinct from that of what is the meaning of moral sentences. Nevertheless, I think that an understanding of the nature of motivation is essential to an adequate account of moral language. For although not all motivated (and intentional) actions are susceptible to moral assessment, yet every action which is morally judged must be a motivated (as well as an intentional) one. In what follows I will try to defend ethical non-descriptivism by arguing for the internalist conception of motivation on which it is based.

1. *Metaethical theories*

Four different distinctions can be drawn between metaethical theories: 1) an ontological distinction between realism (according to which moral properties and facts do exist which are either reducible or irreducible to natural ones) and anti-realism (which claims that there exist no moral properties or facts whatever); 2) an epistemological distinction between cognitivism (according to which moral judgements have a truth-value which can be known) and non-cognitivism (which maintains that they have no truth-conditions at all and cannot, therefore, be known to be either true or false); 3) a logical or conceptual distinction between descriptivism (according to which the meaning of moral judgements is determined completely by their truth-conditions, that is, they are purely descriptive statements) and non-descriptivism (according to which moral judgements are not entirely dependent for their meaning on truth-conditions, that is, they have an expressive function rather than a purely descriptive one); (4) a psychological distinction between the view that moral judgements express beliefs and the view that they express non-cognitive attitudes such as desires.
The ontological distinction must be rejected because in one sense of the verb "exist" even a non-descriptivist may admit that moral properties and facts exist. In this sense, to say that a moral property or fact exists means that we can talk about it meaningfully, or truthfully, or that we can formulate a proposition whose subject is

the property or fact in question.(1) On the other hand, even a descriptivist may deny that moral properties and facts exist in rerum natura.(2) The epistemological distinction is just as unsatisfactory as the ontological one, since the epistemological question must be distinguished from that concerning the function of moral judgements. One may agree that they have a truth-value which can be known,(3) while holding that they not only have a descriptive meaning but also an evaluative meaning, which is independent of the former and primary to it.

It seems preferable, then, to draw a logical (or conceptual) distinction rather than an ontological or an epistemological one. As regards the psychological distinction, however, I do not think (unlike Richard Hare) that it collapses into the logical or conceptual. True, since the beliefs and attitudes in question share the property of intentionality that all mental states have, their full characterization demands a proposition or "that"-clause which gives their content; that is to say, the full explanation of these psychological states demands a logical or conceptual explanation of the words in which they are or would be expressed. As we shall see, however, the distinction between beliefs and desires is central to non-descriptivism. For non-descriptivism is based on a kind of motivational internalism that depends crucially on that very distinction.

2. *Theories of motivation*

Theories of general motivation divide into internalist and externalist ones. As to motivational internalism, a distinction must be drawn between a strong and a weak version of it: while agreeing that desire is a necessary element of the state of being motivated, they disagree about what is the nature and role played by desire in moving us to act.

Strong internalism holds that one is motivated to perform an action if, and only if, one wants to perform it for its own sake or as a means conducive to the desired object, and believes that performing that action will contribute to realizing her desire. This view is based on the claim that desires are non-cognitive states, that is, existences independent of beliefs. Strong internalists, however, do not obscure the difference between being motivated to act and having a desire to act. For they do not claim that motivation depends entirely on desire, but rather that desire can motivate only when combined with a belief about the means conducive to the desired end.(4) Desires as well as beliefs have no intrinsic motivating power: since desire and belief are distinct existences, they do not entail each other; so both of them are needed if an agent is to be moved to action. Yet strong internalists point out a disanalogy between desire and belief, that is, the fact that they play quite different roles in motivation: desire drives the agent and is the very source of motivation, whereas belief merely gives a direction to the pull exerted by desire.(5) Weak internalists, by contrast, deny that there is such a disanalogy and hold that

the fact that an agent did something intentionally and was, therefore, motivated to do it entails that she wanted so to act: that she had such a desire is merely a logical consequence of the fact that she acted. According to weak internalism, then, desire comes from belief.(6) On the other hand, motivational externalism maintains that motivation does not need any desire at all: since beliefs can motivate all by themselves, one may be motivated to do something even if one has no desire to do it. This view, however, entails weak internalism. For if it is a sufficient condition of one's being moved to do something that one have a certain belief about it, then it is a fortiori true that the desire needed to move one to act comes from that very belief. In other words, belief is the ultimate source of motivation.

As to theories of moral motivation, there are many different forms of internalism and externalism,(7) depending upon whether what the motivation is taken to be internal or external to is duty or the sense of duty, or a belief or judgement attributing a duty. I shall focus my attention on the relation between moral judgements and motivation. According to judgement internalism,(8) motivation to act morally is internal to moral judgements; that is, it comes from their very meaning. So it is not conceptually possible that one sincerely makes (or assents to) a moral judgement without being motivated to act accordingly.(9) Judgement externalism, by contrast, holds that the connection between moral judgements and motivation is causal or psychological, that is, external to the meaning of judgements. So one may sincerely judge that an action is right while lacking any motive to perform it.

This view is consistent with descriptivism:(10) since the truth-value of a judgement does not depend on the speaker's being in some particular psychological state, the judgement that an action is right can be true and guide conduct even if the person who made it has no motive to act accordingly. Such a view can account for the normative force of moral judgements. It seems, however, to fail to explain how they can move to action: if the agent is not in such a psychological state as to be moved to perform the action recommended by a certain judgement, then she will not be moved to perform that action while recognizing that the judgement is true. On the contrary, judgement internalism is consistent with, and indeed essential to, non-descriptivism. This is one of the reasons why I shall focus my attention on judgement internalism. The other reason for doing so is that this thesis is of special interest not just because it represents important common ground between Humeans and Kantians, but also because it is central to understanding the sense in which moral judgements are practical.(11)

3. *Desires and beliefs*

Non-descriptivists subscribe to Hume's argument about the inertia of reason: moral judgements have an intrinsic motivating force; motivation comes from a certain non-

cognitive state of the agent such as a desire, feeling, attitude, or disposition to action, whereas beliefs (and cognitive states more generally) have no intrinsic motivating force; therefore, moral judgements are the expression of non-cognitive states. Thus, a non-descriptivist conclusion does follow from judgement internalism (which is the first premise of Hume's argument),(12) together with strong motivational internalism (which is the second premise).

There is no symmetrical relation, however, between metaethical theories, on the one hand, and theories of motivation, on the other. For although ethical non-descriptivism does entail both strong motivational internalism and judgement internalism, not all varieties of descriptivism entail motivational externalism, nor do they entail judgement externalism.(13) Externalist descriptivists accept the strong internalist view that it is a necessary condition for one to be motivated to act that one be in a certain non-cognitive state. Yet they claim that moral judgements are not intrinsically motivating: their motivational force arises from something external to their meaning, such as a psychological state of the speaker. One is motivated to perform the action one judges one ought to perform only if she has a desire to do so; for the judgement describes a property of that action, and purely descriptive statements (as well as the beliefs they express) lack motivating force.(14) Internalist descriptivists, by contrast, accept judgement internalism; yet they reject the strong internalist thesis that desire is the ultimate source of motivation. They hold a weak internalist view of motivation. Because of its conception of desires as coming from certain cognitive states, weak motivational internalism is inconsistent with non-descriptivism.

If we are to refute descriptivism, therefore, we must argue for something more than judgement internalism. What metaethical conclusion does follow from it depends, in my opinion, on how desire is understood. If one adopts the weak motivational internalist view that desire derives from belief, then it follows from the thesis that moral judgements have an intrinsic motivating force, together with the thesis that some desire is necessary for one to be motivated, that moral judgements express beliefs (or other cognitive states); that is to say, they are purely descriptive statements. By contrast, from the strong motivational internalist view that desire is a non-cognitive state, together with judgement internalism, it follows that moral judgements are the expression of the speaker's non-cognitive states, that is, they are not purely descriptive statements. Note that formulating strong motivational internalism in terms of the view that desires (as well as beliefs) lack the capacity by themselves to motivate makes it clear that in order to defend non-descriptivism, we must show that desires are distinct from, and independent of, beliefs. To put it another way, an enquiry into the nature of desire and its motivational role is crucial to non-descriptivism. Such an enquiry, however, has been neglected by non-descriptivists.(15)

The view that desire is a non-cognitive state can be argued for by appealing to the notion of a direction of fit of a mental state.(16) For this notion helps understand

what difference between the nature of desire and of belief prevents us from analyzing desires (or, at least, some of them) in terms of beliefs. Beliefs have a mind-to-world direction of fit, that is, they must fit actual states of affairs; for beliefs aim to track the truth, and must be forsaken if the states of affairs they represent do not correspond with the existing ones. Desires, by contrast, have a world-to-mind direction of fit, that is, they are states with which world must fit. Desire does not aim at truth but at satisfaction: if the actual state of affairs is different from that which is represented by the content of one's desire, then one does not have to forsake that desire (unless it is physically impossible to realize it), but rather to try to change the actual state of affairs.(17)

The appeal to the notion of a direction of fit in order to account for the difference between desire and belief is not an ad hoc strategy. For even a committed externalist like Jonathan Dancy points out that there is an asymmetry between the roles that these two mental states play in motivation and maintains that such an asymmetry can be explained in terms of opposite directions of fit.(18) In Dancy's view, however, to say that desire plays a dominant role in motivation in comparison with the role of belief is not inconsistent with the claim that beliefs can give rise to desires: the question of what roles beliefs and desires play in motivation is distinct from that of what is their genealogy. Therefore, to say that the desire that moves someone to act comes from one of her beliefs does not entail denying that the role played by desire in exerting a pull on the agent is primary to the role played by the belief from which desire comes.(19)

4. *The akratic and the amoralist*

It is usually objected to ethical non-descriptivism that because it assumes that moral judgements have an intrinsic motivating force, it fails to explain *akrasia* and amoralism.

Akrasia is an incapacity to be motivated to act, and to act, in accordance with one's own evaluative (moral or non-moral) judgements. Such an incapacity is a sort of irrationality in that the agent acts contrary to her moral convictions: while admitting that the reasons for acting in accordance with her judgement are stronger than the reasons against doing so, she is not motivated to do so and intentionally acts contrary to her judgment, thereby acting on a desire she wants not to have more than she wants to. Akratic behaviour seems hard to be explained by non-descriptivists because of their internalist view about the connection between moral judgements and motivation. For were this connection to be a conceptually necessary one, that is, a connection coming from moral judgements' being the expression of certain non-cognitive states, then it would be hard to explain how could one judge that one ought to do something, yet fail to do it. The judgement, were it to be sincere, should be sufficient to move one to act even though one also

had a desire which pulled her in the opposite direction. So, were the agent to act intentionally and of her free will, then she should act in accordance with the judgement.

It has been claimed that non-descriptivists fail to explain akratic behaviour because they do not distinguish between motivation coming from moral evaluations and motivation coming from desires. ([20]) Were it the case that people were moved to action by their own desires, as strong motivational internalism maintains, then it would be hard to explain the conflict, which often occurs in our daily lives, between motivation arising from one's own sincere moral judgement and motivation arising from the pleasure one expects from acting contrary to one's judgement. What would one be saying if, while so acting, one were to say that one wanted to act in accordance with her judgement? It does not make sense to say that one intentionally performed a different action from the one she wanted to perform, if the verb "want" is taken in a formal sense in which wanting is being motivated. For the fact that an agent who intentionally performed an action wanted to perform it is a merely logical consequence of the fact that she did so. If, therefore, someone who intentionally did something contrary to her own judgement said that she wanted to act in accordance with it, then the motive she had to do so must have been weaker than her motive to do what she actually did. On the contrary, it makes perfectly good sense to say that one intentionally performed a different action from the one she wanted to perform, if "want" is taken in an evaluative sense, in which if one wants to do a more than one wants to do b, then one ascribes a greater value to a than to b. According to the opponents of non-descriptivism, the evaluative sense of "want" must be distinguished from the motivational one, in which if I want to do a more than I want to do b, then I am motivated more strongly to do a than to do b. Akratic behaviour can only be explained by giving up the claim that the motivational force of a desire is proportional to the value that the desirer ascribes to the desired object.

It seems to me that this objection to non-descriptivism might well be doubted. Granted, non-descriptivists would fail to account for akrasia, were they to reject the distinction between the evaluative and motivational senses of "want" (or "desire"), that is, were they to identify desire with a motivational state and to hold that having a desire is tantamount to being motivated. In my opinion, however, non-descriptivists are not committed to accepting such a view of desire. Rather, this view is embraced by the very opponents of strong motivational internalism (such as Thomas Nagel). Moreover, if we regard moral judgments as sentences which express desires or other non-cognitive states, then it is not at all hard to explain the case of an agent who sincerely judges that she ought to perform a certain action, but wants to do something contrary to it and acts on this desire instead of that expressed by her judgement. Such a case can be described in terms of a conflict between two different (or even opposite) kinds of desire, that is, between a non-evaluative desire, on the one hand, and an evaluative desire, on the other.([21])

Finally, non-descriptivists would be unable to explain akratic behaviour, were they to claim that moral judgements have such a motivating force as to override all the other desires the agent has. Note, however, that to say that it is not conceptually possible for one to judge that one ought to do something without being motivated to do it is not the same as saying that one's judgement entails a stronger motivation than any other motive one might have to act otherwise. Hare is the only non-descriptivist to claim that moral judgements have the property of overridingness.(22)

Unlike the akratic, the amoralist has no motivation at all to act in accordance with moral judgements. Note that the reason why the amoralist acts contrary to a certain moral judgement is not that she has two opposite desires, the non-evaluative one overriding the evaluative. Nor does amoralist's indifference to morals depend on her being unable to use moral language properly; for she does know full well how to use it. The point is that when the amoralist makes a judgement, she is using moral terms in an "off-colour" or "inverted commas" sense:(23) in her mouth these terms no longer have their standard evaluative meaning, but only their descriptive meaning. That is, when making a moral judgement, the amoralist simply quotes others' judgement without accepting it. Unlike the akratic, who is unable to be moved to act on her own judgements, the amoralist is not unable to be morally motivated: were she to use moral language in an evaluative sense, then she would be moved to act morally. The point is, however, that the amoralist rejects the very institution of morals.

According to David Brink, non-descriptivism fails to take amoralism seriously.(24) For if moral judgements are by their very meaning motivating, then the agent who is not at all moved to act on the judgement she made or assented to must have misunderstood its meaning. Non-descriptivists could only allow the conceptual possibility of amoralism if they embraced a weak form of judgement internalism, according to which the motivational force of moral judgements needs not override the motives an agent may have to act otherwise.(25) I do not agree with this objection. First, as I have already said, Hare is the only non-descriptivist to ascribe overridingness to moral judgements. Secondly, he rejects Brink's characterization of the amoralist as someone who does use moral words evaluatively while not being motivated by her own judgements.(26) Nor would Hare accept the stronger view according to which the amoralist does not reject every moral value.(27) On this view, in rejecting morality the amoral agent appeals to values that can be shared by those who adopt the moral point of view. The amoralist rejects moral values not because they are moral values, but because they are incompatible with her own values. Note that this conception of amoralism relies on the assumption that features such as strength and self-reliance are values that those who embrace a moral perspective can share with the amoralist. Now, those features may be regarded as positive values, but some argument has to be provided for the view that they are morally significant. So it seems preferable to characterize the amoralist as someone

who rejects moral judgements entirely, rather than as someone who recognizes their normative force without being moved by them. Such definition allows one to claim that amoralism is compatible with the truth of the view that there is a necessary connection between making or sincerely assenting to a moral judgement and being moved to act on it. This is just the kind of judgement internalism on which non-descriptivism is based.

5. *Motivated desires*

Weak internalists agree that someone who acted on her moral judgement wanted to do so. According to them, however, saying that one had such desire is the same as saying that the belief voiced in the judgement was sufficient to move her. Moral judgements describe certain properties of actions and have a motivating force which springs from the very beliefs they express; for it is a belief that generates the desire that one must have in order to be moved to act. And if it is true that beliefs are capable of generating desires, then it follows, from the combination of the thesis that moral judgements are intrinsically motivating with the thesis that motivation does not come from any desire (although desire is a necessary condition of one's being motivated), that moral judgements are descriptive statements, that is, they are the expression of beliefs.

Weak internalism is a coherentist theory of motivation, since it denies that any desire which moves to action is a basic one: every element of the agent's motivational structure is coherent with some other element of it. In other words, there is no desire on which all the other desires depend. This view, however, seems to invite a regress. For saying that the justification of a desire depends, at least in part, on another desire is tantamount to saying that the former is not fully justified unless the latter is, which in turn can only be justified via another desire, and so on. In order to avoid such a regress, therefore, coherentists have to admit that there are at least some desires which cannot be justified or supported by other (justified) desires; that is, they have to acknowledge that at least some desires are directly justified. Yet coherentists reject the very idea that there is any directly justified desire. For they claim that justification is a function of certain relations between justified elements: every desire is at least in part justified by its relation to another desire. Note that such a claim forces coherentists to acknowledge a circularity in the agent's motivational structure. For support is a transitive relation, and human beings' sets of desires are finite. So, if every desire belonging to the set of justified desires is supported by at least another desire belonging to that set, then every justified desire is at least in part self-justified, that is, it is justified at least in part by itself. Such a conclusion is not acceptable to coherentists (or weak internalists), since they reject the very notion of self-justification. How, then, can weak motivational internalism be argued for?

Nagel has tried to defend it by drawing a distinction between two kinds of desires: unmotivated desires (such as the appetites and in certain cases the emotions), which simply come to us, and motivated desires, which are arrived at by decision and after deliberation.(28) According to Nagel, strong internalism fails to draw such a distinction. Nagel maintains that the claim that a desire underlies every intentional act is true only if the term "desire" is taken in so broad a sense as to cover motivated as well as unmotivated desires. When one does something intentionally, one is motivated to do it because one thinks that there is a (justifying) reason to do so. There is no need, according to Nagel, to appeal to any distinct desire in order to explain motivation to act. Desire, although it is a logically necessary condition (because it is a logical consequence) of the motivational efficacy of the agent's beliefs, is not necessary either as a condition contributing to such efficacy, or as a causal condition. That the agent has the appropriate desire simply follows from the fact that certain considerations move her to perform the action she actually performs.(29)

It seems to me that Nagel's account of the role of desire in motivation is quite puzzling. The first puzzle relates to the persistence of Nagel in the attribution of a desire to the agent even in cases in which the motivational burden is carried by reference to some cognitive state.(30) The second puzzle concerns the concept of a motivated desire. To appeal to this concept in order to refute strong motivational internalism is to assume that deliberation (by which an agent arrives at certain motivated desires) does not start from any unmotivated (i.e. basic) desire. For if deliberation were grounded on such mental states, then the motivation it generates would turn out to come ultimately from some unmotivated desires. To employ the concept of a motivated desire, therefore, Nagel must provide an argument for the view that cognitive states are the starting points of practical deliberation.

6. *Motivating cognitive states*

There is, however, another way to argue for the view that desires are not independent of beliefs, thereby refuting strong internalism. Weak internalists might try to point to certain cognitive states having both the mind-to-world direction distinctive of beliefs and the world-to-mind direction distinctive of desires. Were this strategy to succeed, strong internalism would be refuted by appealing to the very notion that is central to it.

John McDowell has pursued such a strategy by focusing his attention on the virtuous agent's mental state. According to McDowell, the virtuous agent is someone who sees the action she ought to perform in a favourable light; that is to say, she is able to recognize those features which make that action a morally good one, and to be motivated to perform it. The virtuous agent's psychological state is both a belief and a desire: it is a cognitive state, since it consists of a peculiar way of seeing the

action that ought to be performed; yet it is also a motivating state, since to see a certain action in a favourable light is the same as being motivated to perform it. (31) McDowell points out, however, that such a mental state does not consist of two distinct mental states (that is, the belief that the action in question has certain features that make it right and the desire to perform it), since otherwise some account would have to be given of the relation between them.(32)

McDowell agrees that those who act in accordance with a moral judgement may have some desire that will be realized by so acting. Yet he claims (as Nagel does) that desire is not a condition contributing to the motivational efficacy of the agent's beliefs about the action at issue, which beliefs cast it in a favourable light. The desire that motivates the agent is not intelligible independently of the way she sees the action: to say that she wants to perform it is the same as saying that she is moved by her own beliefs about it. The action performed is a result of the agent's exercising the capacity to see in a certain distinctive way her circumstances of action. It is such capacity (which is, according to McDowell, a sort of sensitivity) that enables the virtuous person to grasp the relevant facts of her own deliberative situation, and to decide how to act. Beliefs are neither distinct from desires, nor lacking in motivating force, as both the non-descriptivist and the externalist descriptivist would have it.(33) What holds for the virtuous agent's psychological state also applies, according to McDowell, to perceptual states: perception that some features of an action are morally relevant cannot be analyzed into a cognitive and a non-cognitive element.

It is to be noted that there is a parallel between McDowell's rejection of the distinction between beliefs and desires (or between cognitive and non-cognitive elements in the virtuous agent's psychological state), on the one hand, and his rejection of the distinction that non-descriptivists draw between descriptive and evaluative meanings of moral terms, on the other. Indeed, McDowell calls himself an "anti-noncognitivist".(34) Were it possible to separate the descriptive meaning of moral words from their evaluative meaning, that is, to apply words like "right" to whatever kind of action, then a non-virtuous agent might see the action recommended by a certain moral judgement in just the same way as the virtuous agent sees it without yet being moved to perform it. McDowell, however, points out that it is not that these two agents have the same beliefs about non-moral features of the action in question, while differing from each other just in that only the virtuous agent wants to perform it. For it is not possible, according to McDowell, to see that an action has certain right-making features without having any pro-attitude toward performing it. The point is that the two agents have different beliefs about the same action, and the way the virtuous agent sees it is not neutral from an evaluative standpoint. (35) So her desire to perform the action can only be understood by seeing that action as she sees it. (36)

It might be objected to McDowell, however, that if the connection between believing that an action has certain features and being motivated to perform it were grounded

on the agent's having a virtuous character, then beliefs would turn out not to be what moves her, but rather the expression of her capacity to be motivated to act morally. McDowell does not explain how someone who sees her own deliberative situation in the way distinctive of the virtuous could thereby come to have a disposition to act morally. What McDowell says seems to suggest that only those who already are virtuous can come to have the cognitive and motivating state peculiar to the virtuous, that is, to see the situation they find themselves in as the virtuous person would do.

Most importantly, McDowell's account of the virtuous agent seems to be inconsistent with the possibility of akrasia (or, to use Michael Stocker's term, (37) of other "depressions", such as apathy, despair, and a feeling of uselessness or futility). If the virtuous agent's belief that a certain action has some features which make it a morally wrong one could not be distinguished from the desire to perform it, then, were she to lose her desire to act morally, it would be at least possible that she also lose the cognitive capacity to see that action in a favourable light. If, for example, someone who has always wanted to make shy persons feel at their ease loses such desire, then it follows from McDowell's account that she will be no longer able to grasp their shyness. I do not agree with such an account of akrasia. For the akratic is unable to perform the actions she ought to perform, while recognizing that she ought to perform them and believing that the reasons for them are stronger than contrary ones. The akratic sees these actions in the same way as the virtuous agent would see them, and faces with a conflict just because she is still able to see what she ought to do and what is the moral cost of her not doing it. McDowell should show that akrasia undermines the agent's cognitive capacities. What is more, he should provide reasons in support of the view that capacity to see what ought to be done is a cognitive capacity.

7. *Conclusion*

Metaethics is closely related to theory of motivation. My point in this paper has been that an enquiry into motivation, the role played by desire in it, and the nature of desire itself is essential to a defence of the non-descriptivist view that moral judgements are not purely descriptive statements, but rather the expression of certain non-cognitive attitudes. This view relies on two distinct theses, both of which concerning motivation: judgement internalism, which holds that moral judgements have an intrinsic motivational force, and strong motivational internalism, according to which motivation comes via desires that are independent of any cognitive states. I have argued that proponents of the former thesis can explain both akratic and amoralist behaviour, contrary to what the externalist claims. Then I have argued for the latter thesis, by rejecting both Nagel's argument for the view that the desire needed for motivation comes from a belief, and McDowell's argument for the view that such a desire cannot be distinguished from belief.(38)

Note

(1) Cf. R.M. Hare, *Ontology in Ethics* (1985), in his *Essays in Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 86-87.

(2) John L. Mackie is the most famous proponent of an "error theory", according to which moral judgements have a truth-value, but are uniformly false because the moral properties they ascribe to actions, persons, or states of affairs do not exist (see his *A Refutation of Morals,* "Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy" 24 [1946]: 77-90, and *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*: Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977).

(3) Cf. R.M. Hare, Objective Prescriptions (1993), in his *Objective Prescriptions and Other Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 4.

(4) Hume himself, to whom this theory can be traced back, insists only that beliefs lack motivating power, without pronouncing on whether a desire can by itself motivate action (cf. *A Treatise of Human Nature* [1739-1740], ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888, pp. 118-119).

(5) Cf. R. Audi, *Acting for Reasons*, "The Philosophical Review" 95 (1986), p. 513.

(6) Cf. M. Smith, *The Humean Theory of Motivation*, "Mind" 96 (1987), p. 36.

(7) The distinction between internalist and externalist views about moral motivation was introduced by William D. Falk, who adopted the former (cf. *'Ought' and Motivation* [1947-1948], in his *Ought, Reasons, and Morality. The Collected Papers of W.D. Falk* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986], p. 40).

(8) The term is S.L. Darwall's (cf. *Internalism and Agency*, "Philosophical Perspectives" 6 [1992], p. 155; see also his *Reasons, Motives, and the Demands of Morality: An Introduction,* in S.L. Darwall-A. Gibbard-P. Railton, eds, *Moral Discourse and Practice. Some Philosophical Approaches* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], p. 308).

(9) Cf. R.M. Hare, *Internalism and Externalism in Ethics* (1996), in his Objective Prescriptions and Other Essays, p. 96.

(10) Cf. W.K. Frankena, *Obligation and Motivation in Recent Moral Philosophy*, in A.I. Melden, ed., *Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958), p. 56.

(11) Cf. R. Audi, *Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 224.

(12) Cf. D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 457. It is a debated question, however, whether Hume really was a judgement internalist. For a negative answer to this question, see C. Brown, *Is Hume an Internalist?*, "Journal of the History of Philosophy" 26 (1988): pp. 69-87.

(13) Externalist descriptivism is the view held by G.E. Moore, H.A. Prichard, W.D. Ross, and W.K. Frankena, and, more recently, by P. Railton, D. Copp, and D. Brink. On the contrary, W.D. Falk, and, more recently, T. Nagel, J. McDowell, D. Wiggins, and M. Smith have developed different forms of internalist descriptivism.

(14) Cf. W.D. Ross, *Foundations of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 226-227.

(15) A.J. Ayer (*Language, Truth and Logic* [London: Gollancz, 1936], ch. 6) and C.L. Stevenson (*The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms*, "Mind" 46 [1937]: pp. 14-31) were not very specific in identifying the candidate non-cognitive states voiced in moral judgements. P.H. Nowell-Smith rejected the term "desire" (or "wanting") in favour of "pro-attitude", since he regarded the former as too vague to cover all of the non-cognitive states (cf. *Ethics [*1954] [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957], p. 99). For Hare moral judgements express universal preferences (cf. *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method and Point* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981], pp. 91, 94-116, 185, 220-228). Simon Blackburn (*How To Be an Ethical Anti-Realist* [1988], in his *Essays in Quasi-Realism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], pp. 168-169) and Mark Timmons (*Morality without Foundations. A Defence of Ethical Contextualism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], pp. 138-144) are quite catholic about the possible candidate non-cognitive states expressed by moral judgements. For Allan Gibbard moral judgements are expressions of commitments to norms regulating guilt and anger (cf. *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings. A Theory of Normative Judgment* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990], pp. 6-9, 41-47, 126-129, 147-150, 172-173).

(16) This notion, which was introduced by G.E.M. Anscombe (cf. *Intention* [1957] [Oxford: Blackwell, 1976], p. 56), is central to Michael Smith's argument for strong motivational internalism (cf. *The Moral Problem* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1994], p. 116).

(17) For a rejection of the definition of direction of fit in terms of the locus of responsibility for correspondence between an attitude and the world, see J.D. Velleman, *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 111-112.

(18) Cf. J. Dancy, *Practical Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 14.

(19) Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 82-84.

(20) Cf. M. Staude, *Wanting, Desiring, and Valuing: The Case against Conativism*, in J. Marks, ed., *The Ways of Desire. New Essays in Philosophical Psychology on the Concept of Wanting* (Chicago: Preceding Publishing, 1986), p. 189.

(21) Cf. F.O. Oppenheim, *Non-cognitivismo, razionalità e relativismo*, "Rivista di filosofia" 78 (1987), p. 29.

(22) Cf. R.M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 67, and, more explicitly, Freedom and Reason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 168-169, and *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method and Point*, pp. 53-61, 152-155.

(23) This is one of the cases where moral words are used with no evaluative meaning at all (cf. R.M. Hare, *The Language of Morals*, p. 124).

(24) Cf. D.O. Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 46; see also his *Externalist Moral Realism*, in N. Gillespie, ed., *Moral Realism: Proceedings of the 1985 Spindel Conference*, "The Southern Journal of Philosophy", Supplement 24 (1986), p. 30.

(25) Cf. D.O. Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*, p. 48.

(26) Cf. R.M. Hare, *Internalism and Externalism in Ethics*, p. 104. For a characterization of the amoralist similar to Brink's, see R. Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism. A Defence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), p. 121.

(27) Cf. D. McNaughton, *Moral Vision. An Introduction to Ethics* (Oxford-Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1988), p. 140.

(28) Cf. T. Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 29. A similar, albeit not identical, distinction has been drawn by Stephen Schiffer between "reason-providing" and "reason-following" desires (cf. *A Paradox of Desire*, "American Philosophical Quarterly" 13 [1976], p. 197). T.M. Scanlon expresses Nagel's distinction in terms of a distinction between mere urges and "desires in the directed-attention sense" (cf. *What We Owe to Each Other* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998], pp. 38-39).

(29) For a similar view see P. Foot, *Reasons for Action and Desires* (1972), in her Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), p. 149.

(30) This objection has been raised by Mark Platts (cf. *Moral Realities: An Essay in Philosophical Psychology* [London: Routledge, 1991], p. 53).

(31) Cf. J. McDowell, *Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?*, "Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society". Supplementary Volume 52 (1978), p. 18.

(32) In order to avoid such a difficulty J.E.J. Altham has introduced the term "besire" (cf. *The Legacy of Emotivism*, in G. Macdonald-C. Wright, eds, *Facts, Science and Morality: Essays on A.J. Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1986], p. 284).

(33) Cf. J. McDowell, *Non-Cognitivism and Rule Following*, in S.H. Holtzman-C. Leich eds, *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 154.

(34) Cf. J. McDowell, *Virtue and Reason* (1979), in R. Crisp-M. Slote, eds., *Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 162.

(35) Cf. J. McDowell, *Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?*, p. 22.

(36) Cf. J. McDowell, *Virtue and Reason*, p. 159.

(37) Cf. M. Stocker, *Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology*, "The Journal of Philosophy" 76 (1979), p. 744.

(38) My thanks to Tommaso Piazza and Sergio Filippo Magni for their comments on this paper.