



# The Activity of Reason

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# The Activity of Reason

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Then you have a look around, and see that none of the uninitiated are listening to us – I mean the people who think that nothing exists but what they can grasp with both hands; people who refuse to admit that actions and processes and the invisible world in general have any place in reality.

Plato, *Theaetetus* 155e<sup>1</sup>

...as regards mere perception and receptivity to sensations he must count himself as belonging to the *world of sense*, but with regard to what there may be of pure activity in him (what reaches consciousness immediately and not through affection of the senses) he must count himself as belonging to the *intellectual world*...

Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 4:451<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Introduction

A venerable tradition holds that the difference between human beings and the other animals is that human beings are rational animals, that is, animals with reason. In the philosophical tradition, reason is often identified as the active capacity or power of the mind. This identification is implicit in the contrasts generally made between reason and sensation or perception, in the theoretical realm; and between reason and passion or desire, in the practical realm. It is also explicit in the work of some of our major philosophers: in Kant's association of reason with the mind's spontaneity, and in Aristotle's doctrine of the active intellect or *nous*, for example. Putting these two ideas together – that reason is what distinguishes us from the other animals, and that reason is some special way the active dimension of the mind – we get the thesis that the human

mind is active in some way that the minds of the other animals are not, and that this activity is the essence of rationality.

My project in this paper is to articulate and defend that idea. I will offer an account of why the human mind is different from the minds of the other animals, and suggest a way of characterizing the activity of reason. Although my aim is to present a view that I find compelling rather than to argue against alternative views, I do wish to contrast my view with two other views that have currency on the contemporary scene. First, there is the view that particular substantive reasons are the primary locus and source of normativity, a view I will call “substantive realism” about reasons. According to this view, the work of reason is to recognize and respond to these reasons. So reason as conceived by this view is a receptive rather than a purely active faculty. Second, there is the resulting view that rationality is something different from reason. I will begin by discussing some worries I have about these views, some possible problems which I think can be traced to their failure to do justice to the activity of reason.

## 2. Views that Give Priority to Substantive Reasons

When we talk about reason, we seem to have three different things in mind. One is the general faculty or capacity of reason, often, as I have just said, identified with the active dimension of the mind. Reason has also traditionally been identified with either the employment of, or simply conformity to, certain principles, namely rational principles, which may be taken to include some of the following: the rules of logical inference, the principles which Kant identified as principles of the understanding, canons for the assessment of evidence, mathematical principles, and the principles of practical

reason. A person is called “rational” when her beliefs and actions conform to the dictates of those principles, or when she consciously guides her deliberations by them.<sup>3</sup> And then finally, there are “reasons,” the particular considerations that count in favor of belief or action. To avoid confusion, I will refer to these particular considerations as “substantive reasons.”

There are a variety of views that one might take about the relationships among these three things. According to substantive realism about reasons, versions of which have been advocated by Tim Scanlon, Derek Parfit, and Joseph Raz, among others, the primary item here is the third thing I mentioned, the substantive reason, a consideration that counts in favor of some belief, action, or attitude, and that has normative force.<sup>4</sup> Reason, according to these philosophers, is the faculty that enables us to recognize and respond correctly to these substantive reasons.

There are familiar worries, which I share, about both the metaphysics and the epistemology of substantive realism about reasons. There are worries about whether it is consistent with a naturalistic view of the world, and about how exactly we are supposed to know what reasons there are. But rather than going over this well-trodden ground here, I want to begin by talking about a problem less commonly discussed. The problem is that this conception of reasons seems to make them atomistic, in a way that makes it hard to see how they can do their job. What I mean is that, on this conception of reasons, it is hard to see why there is any general reason to expect that there will be, in any given case, one course of action, or even one belief, that the reasons, all things considered, will favor. Why should we expect reason so conceived to give us determinate answers about what to believe and to do, even in ideal conditions, when we

know what all the relevant reasons are? That is, why shouldn't it just turn out to be the case that some considerations favor a certain belief or action, while others are against it, and there is no more to say?

At this point an interesting disanalogy may emerge between theoretical and practical reasons. In the case of theoretical reasons, many philosophers would want to argue that we expect the reasons to give us an answer to the question what to believe because belief aims at truth. Substantive reasons in favor of believing something are reasons for considering it to be true; and since the truth is one thing, the reasons must ultimately count in favor believing that one truth. So the faculty of reason, on its theoretical side, is a faculty that enables us to recognize considerations that will guide us to the truth.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of practical reason, on the other hand, some philosophers would give a very different kind of answer to the worry that the reasons might not point to a conclusion: they will claim that practical reasons have a measurable dimension – weights or strengths – and that we arrive at a decision about what to do by determining where the balance of these weights or strengths, that is, the “balance of reasons,” lies.<sup>6</sup>

Before I go on, I should perhaps make it clear why I think these two explanations are different. We do sometimes talk about the weight of the evidence, and that may mislead us into thinking that the two cases are analogous. But they are not, for ordinarily we only talk about the weight of the evidence in cases where we have no conclusive reason for believing one thing rather than another, and the weight of the evidence only shows us how probable it is that something is true. More importantly, no one thinks that anything is true *in virtue of* being supported by the weight of the

evidence, and therefore those who suppose that belief aims at truth would deny that a belief is everything that it should be in virtue of being supported by the weight of the evidence. But practical conclusions *are* supposed to be everything that they should be in virtue of being supported by the balance or weight of the reasons involved. For actions, being supported by the weight or strength of the reasons is all that is wanted – it is essentially the same property as being “right” or at least “all right” – while for beliefs, being supported by the weight of the reasons is a way of getting at something else, the truth. So if we accept this combination of views, we are left with a real, and rather puzzling, disanalogy. And because of that, it seems hard to construct a consistent story about why beliefs and actions are both the kinds of things that need to be supported by reasons.

In the case of practical reasons, the idea of weights does have intuitive appeal in some cases, namely those in which we are comparing plainly commensurable things. The reason for giving me the painkiller is weightier than the reason for giving it to you, perhaps, if my pain is the kind that results from invasive surgery and yours is the kind that results from stubbing your toe.<sup>7</sup> But few philosophers have anything much to say about how we go about balancing reasons in other kinds of cases, or have attempted to explain why substantive reasons should have this supposed dimension, “weight,” or “strength” that makes them commensurable. So I do not see any in-principle reason, on this theory, why our recognition of reasons shouldn’t leave us with a set of incommensurable considerations for and against various actions. Of course, on any theory of practical reason, there are problems getting decisive answers about what we should do in all cases, so perhaps it would be unfair to press this objection too hard. Or

some might be willing to accept it – in practical cases, perhaps, sometimes it really is the case that all we can get is a bunch of considerations for and a bunch against. But if reasons do not, at least in principle, tend to favor a single belief or action, they will be not be very good at doing their job, which is, after all, to enable us to determine what to believe and to do.

This way of putting my complaint brings me to another worry I have about this theory. Human beings, for reasons I will explicate shortly, need reasons. We cannot determine our beliefs or actions without them. And according to this theory, when we look around us, we find them. But this seems like a mere piece of serendipity. The reasons are in no way generated by the problem that, as it happens, they solve; they just happen to be there when we need them. We need to make decisions, and lo and behold, we find around us the reasons we need in order to make those decisions, equipped with weights or strengths that will enable us to balance them up and arrive at a decision. I might put it this way: if reasons did not exist, we would have to invent them. To me, this suggests that, contrary to the theory under consideration, that is what we do.

Finally, let me mention one last concern. Those who favor this theory think that reasons are indefinable: they simply exist, and cannot be analyzed or defined in terms of anything else. I also find this worrying, because it seems to me that reasons and causes have something in common, something that suggests that they are species of a genus. Causes are certainly not considerations in favor of their effects, but we sometimes call them “reasons,” and we use both reasons and causes to answer “why” questions. They are both, to adopt Aristotle’s term, *aitiai*, because. But if reasons and causes are species of a genus, it should be possible, at least in principle, to define them. What is this genus?

This is something that, admittedly, is so basic that it is a little hard to talk about. The Greeks called it a *logos*, Kant called it a *ground*, we might also call it a *story*, in the widest sense, as when philosophers say to each other, “you have to have some story to tell about that.” On my own view, as I will explain later, reasons and causes are species of this genus, whatever it is, for we might define a reason as a ground of belief or action that has been endorsed by the person who believes or acts.

### 3. Disconnected Rational Requirements

But before I turn to that, I want to say a few words about another contemporary theory, which concerns the middle category of the three things we associate with reason, namely, “rationality.” Some contemporary philosophers would call a person “rational” when she responds correctly to substantive reasons, and some would say that that is what being “rational” amounts to. But others have reserved the word “rational” for what they consider to be a somewhat different set of ideas. For instance, in the work of John Broome, “rationality” is associated with a particular set of requirements, which govern the relations among our mental attitudes, but which do not seem to be connected to substantive reasons in the way we might expect.<sup>8</sup> So for instance, we seem to be rationally required to conform our beliefs to the principles of logic. But, according to these philosophers, that does not mean that if you believe *P* and you believe that *P* implies *Q*, you then have a substantive reason to believe *Q*. Why not? Because your belief that *P* or your belief that *P* implies *Q* may be false, in which case we should say that you have no substantive reason to believe *Q*. Or to take a practical example, we seem to be rationally required to take the means to our ends. But according to these



philosophers that does not mean that we have *reasons* to take the means to our ends, for if your end is a bad one, then you have no substantive reason to take the means to it.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, these philosophers grant that if P is true and implies Q, then there is a reason to believe Q, and so they grant that it will seem to a person who believes P and that P implies Q that he has a reason to believe Q. (I assume that they think this because they think we know in advance that the world is logically unified, a point I will come back to.) So one standard response to the sorts of argument that I have just mentioned is to distinguish “subjective” and “objective” reasons or “oughts”: the agent who falsely believes that P and also believes that P implies Q has a subjective, though not an objective, reason to believe Q. But some philosophers deny that there is such a thing as a subjective reason. For one thing, the notion of a subjective reason is slippery in a particular way: it is not clear which facts about your beliefs I am supposed to hold fixed when I identify your subjective reasons. Just your beliefs about the facts, say, or your beliefs about reasons as well? In order to avoid the resulting conundrums, some philosophers prefer to avoid talk of subjective reasons, and say simply that people are sometimes mistaken about what they have reason to do, which is whatever is implied by the substantive reasons that actually pertain to their case. They would deny that there is any sense in which people *should* act on the considerations they take to be reasons, just because they take them to be so.

If you start from the view that I canvassed before – that reasons are objective, mind-independent, normative facts – this may look like a perfectly sensible response. Then all we mean by a “subjective reason” is your best estimate of what the objective reasons are, where those exist independently of your own thought processes, and are

things about which you can be straightforwardly mistaken. But that view has its own conundrum, going back to medieval debates about the erring conscience. For isn't there a sense, after all, in which if someone thinks he ought to do something, then he really ought to do it? Are we just confused when we say that a person should act on his own best judgment, and do what his conscience says? On my own view, there is a reason why we say things like this. As a Kantian, I believe that the normative force of reasons arises from autonomy: from the laws an agent gives to himself. That implies that if an agent tells himself to do something, there *really is* a sense in which he ought to do it, even if he should have told himself to do something else. This view gives ontological priority to the kind of item usually identified as a "subjective reason." On this view, a subjective reason is not your best estimate about what the objective reasons, independently of your thought processes, are. Rather, an objective reason is just a subjective reason that has arisen from those thought processes correctly carried through: one that upon full reflection you could will as a universal law, say.<sup>10</sup>

Some philosophers will think that there can be no difference here: the fact that there is a correct answer, or an objective reason, means that all we *can* be doing when we reflect on what reasons we have is tracking that objective reason. To address this view, it would be necessary to explain why not every way of arriving at an answer counts as "tracking" it. The first step is to say that the "tracking" metaphor describes a way we arrive at mind-independent truth, whereas I am claiming that truths about reasons are mind-dependent. But we then need a characterization of mind-dependence and independence that makes sense of the claim that one can be wrong about a mind-dependent truth. Philosophers who think that what is meant by mind-dependence is

that “thinking makes it so” will not be able to see their way to this conclusion. What I mean by mind-dependence is rather that the body of facts in question would not exist were it not *necessary* for human beings to conceptualize the world in a certain way, where the aim of that mode of conceptualization is not simply one of describing the way things are.<sup>11</sup> Admittedly, for a Kantian, this leaves little that is mind-independent; but truths about empirical matters, where the concepts are ones we have adopted to describe things we find in the environment, are mind-independent. We use the empirical concepts in part simply because of what we find around us. Or to put it more carefully, what makes it necessary for us to use them is not just the way our minds work, but also the way the world independently of us works. (I mean what makes it necessary for us to *use* the concepts, not what it makes it correct to apply them in this or that way. That always depends on the world.) Those who believe that objective reasons are mind-independent in this sense treat them just like things we find in the environment.<sup>12</sup>

Those are large claims and I won't try to defend them further here. Let me return to the view under discussion. If rational requirements do not actually give us reasons, then what are they? Broome has proposed that they are “wide-scope” requirements on our attitudes, that is, roughly speaking, requirements that tell us not to have certain combinations of attitudes, rather than requirements to do or to believe particular things. A wide-scooper thinks that the requirement of *modus ponens*, for example, tells us that we ought not to combine a belief that P, a belief that P implies Q, and a belief that  $\sim Q$ . We ought not to hold those three attitudes together. But, for reasons we have already canvassed, it does not tell us that if you believe that P and you also believe that P implies Q, then you ought to believe that Q. At most, it tells us that

you ought to change one of your attitudes. The “ought,” as Broome puts it, is not “detachable.”

But the claim that rational requirements are requirements on our attitudes seems to me to ignore the context in which we deploy rational requirements. On my view, rational requirements do not govern combinations of our attitudes. They govern *thinking*, the activity of thinking; and that means that they govern someone who is actively trying to determine what she has reason to believe or to do.<sup>13</sup> And thinking has a certain temporal direction. To be rational is not just to have a set of attitudes that happen to conform to a rational requirement. It is to *follow* to a rational requirement, to take it as an instruction. Imagine trying to follow a recipe written by a wide-scoping chef. Normally one might say, “after you sauté the tomatoes and the mushrooms, you should add a little salt to the mixture.” The wide-scoping chef would insist that this cannot be right, since you might have put in black olives rather than mushrooms by mistake, and in that case, it would be much better *not* to add any salt. So the most that the recipe can tell you is that *either* you should add a little salt *or* you should previously have added black olives by mistake. And of course, since the “should” is not detachable, there is no way to take a step. If you hope ever to get your dinner made, you want to avoid recipes written by the wide-scoping chef. If the job of rational requirements is to govern the activities of thought and deliberation, and the point of those activities is to direct us to belief and action, then rational requirements cannot be wide scope, since wide scope requirements cannot do that job.

Of course, some contemporary philosophers have also denied that rational requirements do govern thinking, or at least that they govern it in the way I am

proposing here, that we can be consciously guided by them. These philosophers argue that, because we reason from the content of our beliefs and intentions rather than the fact that we have them, we do not normally consciously employ rational principles. Their point is that, when I reason, I do not normally say to myself, for instance, “because I believe P and I believe that P implies Q, I ought to conclude that Q.” Furthermore, for the reasons I canvassed a moment ago, they also suppose that if I did say this to myself, I would be saying something false. This is because, after all, it is not really because *I believe P* that I ought to believe Q. It is because P provides evidence for or some other ground for an inference to Q. My believing P is neither here nor there. The fact that I might be wrong about P just brings this out vividly.

These views have the odd implication that if human beings became self-conscious about what we are doing when we engage in reasoning – that is, when we conform our beliefs and actions to rational principles – we would suffer from a kind of inability to carry on the activity of reasoning, or at least to carry it on with any confidence that we have any reason to engage in it. And this is more than an abstract possibility, because lately a number of philosophers who hold these views have concluded that rational requirements are not normative after all. For them, the standards of rationality would be normative only if there were some general reason for conforming to them, and some philosophers, such as Niko Kolodny, have concluded that there is no such general reason.<sup>14</sup> To me, it seems especially surprising that philosophers should see a problem here, for philosophers are, by profession, self-conscious about what we are doing when we are reasoning. While doing philosophy, we frequently say things like “because you are committed to this, you must also accept

that,” and we say them to ourselves as well as to each other. Are we just mistaken in thinking that this makes any sense?<sup>15</sup>

I have already complained that, on the view that gives priority to substantive reasons, there is no explanation of why reasons exist: they seem, rather magically, to be on hand to meet our needs. On the views that leave rational requirements detached from the rest of the normative realm, similarly, we can begin to be puzzled about why rational requirements exist. Why do they exist, and where do they come from, especially if we are deluded in thinking they are normative? Here again, we may come to a distinction between theory and practice. As I said before, I suppose that those who favor these views think that logical requirements exist, or seem to exist, because they think the world is in fact logically ordered. So if your views are not logically ordered, you know that one of them must be false. But no such explanation can be given for the requirements of practical reason, so lately some philosophers have been trying to come up with alternative explanations of why, for example, it seems to us as if the fact that we have adopted an end gives us some reason to take the means to it.<sup>16</sup>

I believe that rational requirements exist because they describe the activity of reason, so now I will turn to my own view.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. The Origin of Reason

In the Kantian conception that I favor, the three aspects of reason – that is, the faculty of reason, rational principles, and substantive reasons – are closely related. The faculty of reason is not identified merely as the ability to recognize and respond to reasons. The faculty of reason is identified rather as the active dimension of the mind,

and rational principles are then identified as those that describe or constitute rational activity. They are constitutive principles of rational activity.<sup>18</sup> When those principles are applied by the person who is trying to work out what to believe or to do, they pick out the substantive considerations that we then regard as reasons.

That description of course is schematic, and I will not be able, on this occasion, to give arguments for particular rational principles, or to show that those principles do enable us to pick out substantive reasons.<sup>19</sup> What I do hope to do here is to convey why, in general, it makes sense to regard rational principles as constitutive of the activity of reason, and how the resulting view deals with some of the issues I have raised about the other views.

Let me begin by explaining what I think it means that we are rational animals. I believe that the source of reason is a particular form of self-consciousness that characterizes the human mind. As human beings, we are conscious of the potential grounds of our beliefs and actions *as potential grounds*. A contrast will show what I mean. A non-human animal is guided through her environment by means of her perceptions and her desires and aversions: that is, by her instinctive responses and the other desires and aversions she may have acquired through learning and experience. Her perceptions constitute her representation of her environment, and her instincts, desires and aversions tell her what to do in response to what she finds there. In fact, I believe that for the other animals, perceptual representation and desire and aversion are not strictly separate. Either through original instinct or as a result of learning, a non-human animal represents the world to herself as a world that is, as we might put it, pre-conceptualized and already normatively or practically interpreted. The animal finds

herself in a world that consists of things that are directly perceived *as* food or prey, *as* danger or predator, *as* potential mate, *as* child: that is to say, as things to-be-eaten, to-be-avoided, to-be-mated-with, to-be-cared-for, and so on. To put it a bit dramatically – or anyway, philosophically – an animal’s world is *teleologically organized*: the objects in it are marked out as being “for” certain things or as calling for certain responses. I believe this because I think it is hard to see how perception could have been of any use to the relatively unintelligent animals in which it first evolved if something like this were not the case. Perception could not just provide a simple animal with information on the basis of which the animal had to figure out what to do, so it must be that it tells the animal what to do.<sup>20</sup> So these normatively or practically loaded teleological perceptions serve as the grounds of the animal’s actions – where the ground of an action is a representation that causes the animal to do what she does.

The exact ways in which these normatively loaded perceptions operate on an animal to produce his actions probably differ in ways that can be ranged along a scale, depending on what sort of representations the animal has, or what sort of consciousness he has of them. Primitive animals may respond more or less mechanically to these perceptions; more sophisticated animals may operate with something more like concepts or categories of “food” or “predator” or “threat” to which they respond intelligently; and yet more sophisticated animals may even be aware *that* they and their fellows find certain things desirable or fearful. Exactly how any given kind of animal’s representations give rise to his actions is a matter for further investigation, both philosophical and empirical.



But however it may be with the other animals, there is no question that we human beings are aware, not only *that* we perceive things in a certain way, but also that we are inclined to believe and to act in certain ways on the basis of these perceptions. We are aware not only of our perceptions but also of the way in which they tend to operate on us. That is what I mean by saying that we are aware of the potential grounds of our beliefs and actions as potential grounds.

And I believe that this awareness is the source of reason. For once we are aware that we are inclined to believe or to act in a certain way on the ground of a certain representation, we find ourselves faced with a decision, namely, whether we should do that – whether we should believe or act in the way that the representation calls for or not. Once the space of reflective awareness – reflective distance, as I like to call it – opens up between the potential ground of a belief or action and the belief or action itself, we must step across that distance, and so must be able to endorse the operation of that ground, before we can act or believe. What would have been the *cause* of our belief or action, had we still been operating under the control of instinctive or learned responses, now becomes something experienced as a consideration in favor of a certain belief or action instead, one we can endorse or reject. And when we can endorse the operation of a ground of belief or action on us *as a* ground, then we take that consideration for a reason.

What this means is that the space of reflective distance presents us with both the possibility and the necessity of exerting a kind of control over our beliefs and actions that the other animals do not have.<sup>21</sup> We are, or can be, active, self-directing, with respect to our beliefs and actions to a greater extent than the other animals are, for we

can accept or reject the grounds of belief and action that perception and desire offer to us. We can actively participate in giving shape both to the conception of the world in light of which we act and to the motives on the basis of which we act – and ultimately, in both ways, in giving shape to ourselves. And it is the same fact that we now both can have, and absolutely require, *reasons* to believe and act as we do.<sup>22</sup>

So here is part of the answer to one of the questions I raised earlier: why there are such things as reasons, substantive reasons. There are reasons because self-consciousness transforms the grounds of our beliefs and actions – the perceptions and impulses that would have caused them if we lacked this form of self-consciousness – into substantive reasons. This account of why reasons exist does link them to the problem that they solve: in order to believe and act, we need to endorse some of the potential grounds of our beliefs and actions, and when we do that, we get substantive reasons. And reasons and causes do have something in common, namely that the reasons for our beliefs and actions, at least the initial ones, are the very sorts of things that would have caused our beliefs and actions had self-consciousness not intervened. They are grounds of belief and action that we have endorsed.

##### 5. Identifying the Activity of Reason

But how do we exercise the self-directing power that this form of self-consciousness gives us? How do we pick out which grounds to count as reasons? As I said before, my view is we use rational principles to pick out the substantive reasons, and rational principles, in turn, are the constitutive principles of the activity of reason. So in order to proceed, we need to know what the activity of reason consists in. Now

obviously, if all that we could say about the activity of reason is that it is “evaluating the grounds of our beliefs and actions,” or “justifying our beliefs and actions” then it will look as if the substantive reasons need to be in place before reason – the general capacity of reason – can do its job. No doubt this is part of the attraction of substantive realism about reasons. The substantive realist supposes that all we can be doing when we evaluate the grounds of our beliefs and actions is asking whether they “really are” reasons, where that is a question about whether they have some objective characteristic – intrinsic normativity, counting in favor – that cannot be specified in any other way. So I take the interesting question here to be whether there is some *other* way of characterizing the activity of reason, some other way of saying what we are doing when we evaluate the grounds of our beliefs and actions.

Ask yourself: why do we need to evaluate the grounds of our beliefs and actions? What makes that necessary for us, and not for the other animals? Is it just because they are not smart enough to see that beliefs and actions should be supported by reasons? Or is it because they lack a receptive faculty of reason, the way we lack sonar, and therefore they just cannot see the reasons? I have already suggested that what makes it necessary for us to justify our beliefs and actions is the form of self-consciousness involved, which enables us to call the grounds of our beliefs and actions into question. But when we do that, we are, at the same time, calling two other things into question: on one side, the way of representing or conceptualizing the world that would be given by our instincts if we did not have that form of self-consciousness, and on the other side, our own nature as the source of that way of conceptualizing and responding to the world. So when we are faced with the task of justifying our beliefs

and actions, it is because we are faced with two other tasks, or we could just as well say two other opportunities: we both can, and need to, construct a new way of conceptualizing the world, and we both can, and need to, construct or reconstruct our own nature, as the subject of that conception and as a source of responses to the world. Those two tasks constitute the activity of reason. The other animals do not need to justify their beliefs and actions, because their way of conceptualizing and responding to the world is simply given to them by their teleological perception, by the instinctive ways in which they represent the world to themselves.

There's another way of describing these tasks that I think is helpful here, because it helps us to see why these activities should be shaped and guided by rational principles. When we become aware that we are representing the world to ourselves, when we turn our attention away from what we perceive and onto the fact that what we are doing is perceiving, then there is a way in which the world loses its unity. What was once simply given to us as the environment is now given to us as a heap of perceptions, or rather experiences, and it is now up to us to put them back together into a picture of the world. And in a similar way where once upon a time we always knew what to do in response to a situation, our own possible responses are now given to us as a heap of desires and fears and impulses, and it is up to us to put ourselves back together.<sup>23</sup> The principles of rationality are constitutive of the activity of reason, I suggest, because they are principles of unification.

In the practical case, here is the idea: I believe that in order to regard your movements as actions that you can attribute to yourself as their author, you have to see those movements as arising from yourself as a whole, rather than from something

working in you or on you. The twitch comes from your muscle, the slip from the ice below, but the walking – that comes from you, from you as a whole. Elsewhere I have written about how the principles of practical reason – Kant’s categorical and hypothetical imperatives – serve to unify our wills so that we can regard ourselves as the sources of our actions. I will not try to repeat those arguments here.<sup>24</sup> Instead I want to talk about how it might work in the case of theoretical reason.

To conceive yourself as a knower, in my view, is to conceive yourself as able to form a conception of the world that will enable you to find your way around in it and to act effectively in it. I include “act effectively,” because I want to emphasize that I do not just mean a conception of the world that will enable us to predict and explain events. I also mean a way of conceptualizing the world that will answer to our needs as agents. As I have argued elsewhere, to conceive ourselves as agents is to conceive ourselves as the autonomous and efficacious sources of certain events in the world: that is, as the self-determining causes of certain effects in the world.<sup>25</sup> However exactly we work the details out, if something along these lines is correct, the conception of the world as causally ordered in a general way is essential to our conception of ourselves as agents, a conception that I believe is forced upon us in the first person deliberative standpoint. If that is true, then that the world is, at least in a general way, causally ordered, cannot just be an empirical discovery. For these reasons, I think we are *rationally required* to conceive the world as causally ordered, at least in some general way.<sup>26</sup>

For the world to be the sort of place in which you can find your way around and act effectively, it must be a unified place. What that means is that the *relations* between the various things in the world can be traced and established. If we can say nothing

about how two things or events or regions of space-time are related to each other, we cannot think of them as parts of a unified world. If we cannot trace causal relations, in particular, we cannot act effectively. So it is the business of a conception of the world to establish these various relations. Further argument is required, of course, but I suppose that we may think of the relations in question as logical, spatiotemporal, and causal.

Now we may raise a question about why exactly we suppose that the world admits of a conceptualization that will unify it in these ways. Or rather, since saying “the world” makes it sound as if we already know that what we are confronted with is one unified thing, I should say instead that we may raise a question about why exactly we suppose that what we find ourselves confronted with in experience admits of a conceptualization that will unify it in this way.

One familiar form of philosophical argument reminds us that the unity of the mind and the unity of its object are interdependent. Unless we conform our beliefs to logical and rational principles, our minds themselves are a mere heap of unrelated ideas or theses. And a mere heap of unrelated ideas or theses is not *about* anything, and therefore cannot count itself as thinking about anything or knowing anything.<sup>27</sup> So our conception of ourselves as possible knowers of a world independent of our minds, a world that we can think about, depends on our idea of the world itself as something of which we might possibly form a unified conception.

This explains, to take one example, why we have to take theoretical reasons to be both universal and what I call “public,” or agent-neutral, in their normative force – why that is a rational requirement.<sup>28</sup> If you are to think of your experience as a *perception* of an object, and perception as a way of knowing that object, then you have to

think that, suitably situated, another perceiver with the same sort of perceptual equipment would be having that experience too. Now you might ask, if I am constructing a conception of the world, couldn't I just construct a world that was my world, which only existed for me and nobody else? But the answer is no, because if you are to think of your experience as perception of an object, and perception as a way of knowing that object, then you have to think that if you were to come back to the same place tomorrow, and nothing had changed in the meantime, you would have the same experience again. And that is the same thought as the thought that if another perceiver were suitably situated, he would have the same experience: both scenarios, after all, just involve a change of position. If you cannot have that thought – that if you come back to the same place later, and nothing has changed, you will have the same experience again – then you cannot think of your experience as perception of an object, and of yourself as the knower of that object, and your mind shatters into a mere heap of unrelated experiences.

It follows that if you are to take “I saw it” as a reason to believe it, you must take it as a reason with universal and agent-neutral or “public” normative force. So it is not that we know in advance, somehow, that the world conforms to the principles of theoretical reason, and we should therefore expect true beliefs to do so as well. Rather, that the world conforms to the principles of theoretical reason is a presupposition of the world's being the sort of place we can think about and know about at all. And I think a similar argument could be given for the normativity of the principles of the other kinds of connectedness I just mentioned – causal relatedness in space and time, the kind of relatedness that connects one event to another. Causal relatedness in space and time is a

presupposition of the world's being the sort of place we can find our way around in and also act effectively in – that is, cause things to happen in – ourselves. And since we are faced with the task of constructing a conception of the world that makes that possible, we *must* suppose that the world can be conceptualized in that way.

## 6. An Anti-Realist Conception of Rational Activity

I have been suggesting, in a very general way, that we are committed to conceptualizing the world as conforming to rational standards, because a conception of the world that does not do that cannot do its job, which is to enable us to find our way around and act in it. The theoretical activity of reason is to construct such a conception. This picture of what reason does is of course a Kantian one, and I want to emphasize one implication of that, and also to respond to a possible objection that it raises. First the implication. I do not take it to be the only or even the primary desideratum of a way of conceptualizing the world that it should be “true.” Propositions are true when the concepts that appear in them are applied correctly; but I do not suppose that ways of conceptualizing the world are themselves simply true or false. I think of them on the analogy of maps, since they are devices that enable us to find our way around. And, as is the case with maps, they are answerable *both* to the world they represent, *and* to the conceptual capacities of their users. And in some cases they are also answerable to their suitability for specific cognitive tasks. A tourist exploring the city center on foot will prefer one of those maps on which the cartographer actually draws little pictures of the buildings with their names written across them. But this style of representation and level of detail is not wanted by someone driving across a nation on its highways. For



her purposes it is better if whole towns are represented by tiny dots, so that the spatial and directional relations between them are what emerge as perspicuous. The more detailed map does not give us more truth, or less. It gives us different truths and is more suitable for a certain purpose.

Of course this anti-realist way of thinking about what we are doing when we conceptualize the world is controversial. But, leaving that aside – and here is the objection – it may also make it seem as if I have not after all offered an alternative description of what we are doing when we evaluate the grounds of our beliefs. For surely, you might say, when we evaluate the grounds of our beliefs, at least in an everyday way, what we are interested in is not whether we are conceptualizing the world in the best possible way for our cognitive purposes, but simply whether the belief is true.

In response, I want to make a comparison, and also to pick up the practical side of the question again. In other work I have argued that whenever you make a choice, you are also at the same time constructing your identity.<sup>29</sup> The argument goes roughly like this. From a third-person point of view, outside of the deliberative standpoint, it may look as if what happens when someone makes a choice is that the strongest of his conflicting desires simply wins. But that is not the way it is for you, from your first-person point of view, when you deliberate. When you deliberate, it is as if there were something over and above your desires, something that is you, and that chooses which of them to act on. This means that you take the principle or law on the basis of which you choose to be expressive of yourself: your principle speaks for you. On this basis I have argued that our practical principles are expressive of our conceptions of our

practical identity.<sup>30</sup> The relevant point here is that the picture I have in mind is not that there is a two-step process: step one, you first choose some way of identifying yourself, and step two, you proceed to act in accordance with its principles, like someone following a list of rules. Rather, the idea is that determining what we have reasons and obligations to do – that is, adopting maxims or practical principles – is *at the same time* engaging in the work of identity construction, the ongoing project of a human life.<sup>31</sup> And I am not claiming that when we make everyday choices, we are normally thinking about our identity, rather than about what it is right to do, although I suppose we do think explicitly about our identity in this context sometimes. I do argue, however – again I will not try to summarize the argument here – that the fact that we are engaged in identity construction helps to explain why the process of thinking about what we have reason to do is governed by rational standards, because of the ways in which those standards secure the unity of the self and of agency.<sup>32</sup> In the same way, I am proposing now that determining what we have reason to believe is *at the same time* engaging in the ongoing work of constructing a conception of the world, and that this helps to explain why that process must be governed by rational standards.

To see this it helps to think about the nature of believing. Almost all philosophers would agree that believing P is related to the following things: being prepared to affirm P; being prepared to treat P as a premise in your reasonings about other matters; being prepared accept the logical consequences of P; and being prepared to act as if P were true. Let's call these things the concomitants of belief. Some philosophers suppose that a belief is a particular mental state, something that simply exists or not, and that the concomitants of belief serve as evidence as to whether

someone is in that mental state or not. If, say, someone sincerely affirms something but does not act as if it were true, the evidence is unclear. Other philosophers suppose that the concomitants of belief are constitutive of belief: to say that you do those things is what it *means* to say you believe something. If someone sincerely affirms something but does not act as if it were true, we seem to have a contradiction on our hands; perhaps we will be tempted to deny that he could have been sincere after all. I myself take the concomitants of belief to be constitutive principles of believing: normative standards that arise from the very nature of believing.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, what I am proposing is that, for a rational animal, believing itself is an active state, it is *doing* something, it is an activity: it is *representing* the world to yourself in a certain way.<sup>34</sup> I think that failure to see this is part of where the second of the two views that I described earlier – the view that rationality is something separate from reason – goes astray. Those who hold these views tend to conceive of beliefs and intentions statically, as mental states or attitudes, and therefore regard rational standards merely as standards by which we evaluate combinations of attitudes.<sup>35</sup> The point is somewhat difficult to articulate, but I take this tendency to exemplify a general source of philosophical problems, especially in the philosophy of mind. People tend to reify mental activities into mental states. It is symptomatic of this that philosophers with these views talk about “forming intentions” rather than “intending.” Being “formed” makes the intention an entity, something that can take up space in the mind. And the mind is then conceived as a kind of place that these states occupy. All mental phenomena then seem rather like qualia, in the sense that they are held, or can be held, in an interior gaze. This makes consciousness, and mental life more

generally, seem more mysterious than it is, for it is not all as mysterious as qualia.

Much of what we call the mental, I believe, is actually things that we do.

However that may be, on my view, belief is not simply a mental state or attitude: it is a commitment to going on in a certain way. I think it is a commitment to constructing your conception of the world in a certain way, where that involves a commitment both to certain truths and to the possibility of forming a unified and useable conception of the world that includes those truths. The fact that someone may affirm something sincerely but not act as if it were true, and other such divided responses to the concomitants of belief, simply shows that for a rational animal, believing is something that can be done well or badly – and if badly, the failures can be of various kinds. One may be inconsistent, or wavering, or fail to follow through. That is why our beliefs, like our actions, call for justification – because in a rational animal, believing can be done more or less well. And notice that on this view of what rational believing is, it makes perfectly good sense for us to say, both to ourselves and each other, that because you believe both P and that P implies Q, you ought to believe Q. It is exactly like saying that because you promised to do A and you cannot do A without doing B, you ought to do B.<sup>36</sup> It is a reminder of the normative commitments that are constitutive of taking a certain kind of action, in this case mental action – believing something, that is, representing the world to yourself in a certain way.

## 7. Conclusion

Let me conclude by summarizing the view I am proposing. What does it mean to be a rational animal? A non-human animal finds herself in a teleological world, a

world in which things are already marked out for her as her food, her mates, her offspring, her enemies. It is a conception of the world in her own image, as we might say, that is given to her by her instincts, and it tells her what to believe and to do. But in the human mind, the development of a certain form of self-consciousness – consciousness of the potential grounds of our beliefs and actions – breaks up this teleological conception of the world. It shatters the world into a mass of perceptions or experiences, and the self into a mass of desires and fears and impulses, and in doing so, it creates both the opportunity and the necessity for reconstruction. We are faced with the task of unifying the mass of perception into a conception of the world that enables us to find our way around and act effectively, and of unifying the mass of desires, fears, and responses into a self that can stand behind its movements as their author and so claim them as its actions. It is by imposing rational principles upon on the self that we unify ourselves into agents, and it is by imposing rational order on our perceptions that we form a unified conception of the world.

This conception of reason differs from the views I described earlier in systematic ways, ways that spring from the fact that it conceives reason as an active rather than as a receptive faculty. On this conception, rational requirements exist because they describe the activities of reason, and reasons exist because we need them in order to determine our beliefs and actions. Reasons and causes do have something in common, for at least in the first instance, reasons are the descendants of causes, the sorts of things that would have caused our beliefs and actions had self-consciousness not intervened. Our rational beliefs and intentions are not mere mental attitudes, but active states of normative commitment, and it makes perfect sense to say that they can commit us to

other beliefs and intentions. The work of reason in theory and practice is parallel rather than disanalogous, except that theoretical reason aims at unifying the experienced world, and practical reason aims at unifying the self. And the reason that we human beings, unlike all the other animals, must justify our beliefs and actions, is because we alone among the animals must actively carry out the work of constructing a conception of the world and a self who is both a knower of that world and an agent within it: because we alone among all the animals have to engage in the activity of reason.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the translation by M. J. Levett, revised by Miles Burnyeat, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the translation by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> When her beliefs and actions conform to these principles, or, some philosophers would prefer to say, when her beliefs and *intentions* conform to these principles. As I will note later, some contemporary philosophers think that rationality concerns only the relations among a person's mental attitudes, and some of these philosophers also think that an intention is something separable from an action itself, perhaps a mental state that causes it. Those philosophers would not allow that rationality concerns the relation between attitudes and actions themselves. I believe that intentions are embodied in actions and inseparable from them (see my "Acting for a Reason," in *The Constitution of Agency* (Oxford, 2008) especially pp. 227-9, and *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity* (Oxford, 2009) 6.3.2, pp. 124-5), so I would reject these ideas. Essentially there are three reasons for believing in the separability of intention from action. One is the idea

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that we sometimes form intentions well in advance of the time of action. We have the intention, and yet we have not acted, and so they must be separate. I think, however, that as soon as you “form an intention” – that is, make a decision – you begin to act, because you must immediately begin to deliberate about all of your actions in such a way that the future action will be possible, and that is part of what it is to carry out your intention. The second is the idea that someone may be prevented from carrying out an intention. Suppose, for instance, that I form an intention but then I am immediately seized with an attack of paralysis. (Making it “immediately” blocks the force of my first argument.) Surely I had the intention, but did not act, so they must be two separate things? But it does not follow from the fact that we can identify two aspects of a thing as separate in a defective case that they are separate in a non-defective case. When you are dead, your life becomes something we identify as separable from your body, but that does not show that when you were alive, you must have had a separable soul. An intention is like that – it is the life of an action, its form, its *soul*, and as such, it makes it the action that it is. I mean this in the Aristotelian sense. In Aristotle’s account, we can distinguish the soul from the living body conceptually, but the soul is the cause of the body only in the sense of “formal cause” not “efficient cause.” In the same way, we can distinguish the intention from *the bodily movements* (not from the *action*), but that doesn’t mean that the intention is a separate thing that caused those bodily movements, any more than the soul is a separate thing that causes the living body. Rather, the intention is the form of the bodily movements. (I thank Drew Schroeder for drawing my attention to this objection.) The third reason is that separating intention from action

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allows us to describe *akrasia* as the failure to carry out an intention. I do not think that is the correct way to describe *akrasia*, but explaining why would raise issues too large to be raised in this already bloated footnote.

<sup>4</sup> For Scanlon, see, for instance, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), Chapter 1; “Metaphysics and Morals” (in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Volume 77, No. 2, November 2003); “Reasons: A Puzzling Duality?” (in *Reason and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Philip Pettit, Samuel Scheffler, and Michael Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); “Structural Irrationality” (in *Common Minds: Themes from the Philosophy of Philip Pettit*, ed. Geoffrey Brennan, Robert Goodin, Frank Jackson, and Michael Smith Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and his forthcoming Locke Lectures, *Being Realistic about Reasons*. For Raz, see *Practical Reason and Norms* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); *Engaging Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); “Reasons: Explanatory and Normative” (in *New Essays on the Explanation of Action*, ed. C. Sandis. Palgrave/McMillan, 2009); “Reasons: Practical and Adaptive” (in *Reasons for Action*, ed. David Sobel and Stephen Wall. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For Parfit’s views, see his forthcoming book, *On What Matters*; and “Rationality and Reasons,” (in *Exploring Practical Philosophy: From Action to Values*, ed. Dan Egonsson, Jonas Josefsson, Björn Petterson & Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001, pp. 17-39).

<sup>5</sup> Notice that the claim here is not merely that we have a faculty that enables us to represent the world to ourselves with some accuracy. We do have that, but it is not



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reason; every animal with perception has that. The claim is rather that we come equipped with a faculty that enables us to *recognize* the right way to move from that perceptual representation to what, according to this view, is supposed to be a uniquely accurate conception of the world.

<sup>6</sup> The view might be more complicated: it might involve certain reasons that exclude or silence certain other reasons, for instance. But for my purposes here, it is all the same: I do not see what justifies the assumption that the reasons themselves will come equipped with *some* property that makes it clear how they bear on one another and so that enables us to “balance” them and reach a conclusion. I thank Barbara Herman for the reminder.

<sup>7</sup> Actually, I think that justifying this judgment is more complicated than it looks. See the discussion of aggregation in my “Interacting with Animals” (in *The Oxford Handbook on Ethics and Animals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp and R. G. Frey. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.)

<sup>8</sup> Broome introduced the idea in “Normative Requirements,” (in *Normativity*, ed. Jonathan Dancy. Blackwell, 2000), and has written a number of papers on it, including “Normative Practical Reasoning” (*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supplemental volume 75, pp. 175-93); “Practical Reasoning” (in *Reason and Nature: Essays in the Theory of Rationality*, ed. José Bermúdez and Alan Millar, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 85–111), “Reasons” (in *Reason and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*, ed. by R. Jay Wallace, Michael Smith, Samuel Scheffler, and Philip Pettit. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and “Does Rationality Consist in Responding to Reasons?” (*Journal of Moral Philosophy* 4 (2007), pp. 349-74).

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<sup>9</sup> Another worry that motivates this line of thought is the worry that we can “bootstrap” reasons into existence. By adopting an end we create a reason to take the means; at the limit, if every action is a means to itself, we can create a reason for doing something just by deciding to do it. Since I think there is a clear sense in which we do create reasons, this doesn’t worry me in general. If you can create a reason by making a promise, why can’t you create one by making a decision? But of course not everyone thinks you can create a reason by making a promise; some philosophers think making a promise only gives you a reason by activating other, standing, reasons, like the reason not to disappoint someone’s expectations. These issues are all connected. In any case, I do not think that we can “just decide” to do something any more than we can “just decide” to believe something: in both cases, we have to at least persuade ourselves that we are determined by a consideration that has the form of a law.

<sup>10</sup> See *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 254–8.

<sup>11</sup> Later I will explain why human beings have to conceptualize the world in terms of reasons and causes. See also my “Realism and Constructivism in Twentieth-Century Moral Philosophy,” in *The Constitution of Agency*.

<sup>12</sup> See *The Sources of Normativity*, 1.4.8, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> Niko Kolodny comes close to saying this when he identifies rational requirements as applying to processes rather than states. See his “Why be Rational?” (*Mind* 114:455 (2005), pp. 509–63) and “State or Process Requirements” (*Mind* 116:462 (2007), pp. 371–85).

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<sup>14</sup> Niko Kolodny, in “Why be Rational?” Of course, if you think that rational requirements are wide scope, then rationality doesn’t require that we have any particular beliefs or attitudes: the most that rationality could require of us is that we do a little housekeeping on our attitudes, making sure that the contradictions and other incompatibilities somehow get weeded out. It’s rather like cleaning out the attic. So it’s no wonder that those who conceive of being rational this way think we might have no reason to do it.

<sup>15</sup> As I will argue below, it is a particular feature of human life that we human beings have control of, and therefore take responsibility for, our beliefs and actions. The way we do that is by reasoning – thinking in accord with rational principles. And that is a feature of human life that we try to realize in a special way when we do philosophy. So I find it rather staggering that a philosopher should suggest that rationality is not normative. To me, this conclusion seems like a *reductio ad absurdum* of the views that lead to it.

<sup>16</sup> See Jay Wallace, “Normativity, Commitment, and Instrumental Reason” (in *Normativity and the Will*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006) and Joseph Raz, “The Myth of Instrumental Rationality.” (*Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 1/1 (April, 2005), pp. 1-28).

<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that if there are narrow-scope requirements, there are also wide ones. If having an end requires you to take the means, then you certainly shouldn’t both have an end and not take the means. You can derive a wide-scope requirement from a narrow-scope one, but you can’t derive a narrow-scope requirement from a wide-scope

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one. So if we can explain the narrow -scope requirements in terms of the activity of reason, as I suggest below, then we can explain the wide-scope ones as well. If only wide-scope requirements exist, I believe, their existence is inexplicable.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the notion of constitutive standards and principles see *Self-Constitution*, 2.1, pp. 27-34.

<sup>19</sup> I give arguments for the instrumental principle in “The Normativity of Instrumental Reason,” (in *The Constitution of Agency*), and in *Self-Constitution*, 4.3, pp. 68-72. I give arguments for the categorical imperative in “Self-Constitution in the Ethics of Plato and Kant”, (in *The Constitution of Agency*,) and in *Self-Constitution*, 4.4, pp. 72-80. I give arguments concerning the ability of the categorical imperative to pick out substantive reasons (that is, to give us determinate moral obligations) in “Kant’s Formula of Universal Law,” in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and in chapter 9 of *Self-Constitution*.

<sup>20</sup> If you are inclined to say, “no, it’s instinct that tells the animal what to do,” I will reply that I am describing what I think is the *form* that instinct takes: the animal comes equipped to respond in certain ways to certain perceptual cues, and then expands this set of responses through learning. See *Self-Constitution*, 6.1, pp. 109-32.

<sup>21</sup> Obviously, this is an empirical claim, and I can’t prove it. Were we to find another animal with this kind of self-consciousness, it would be a rational animal.

<sup>22</sup> This account of the nature of reason is taken with some modifications from *The Sources of Normativity*, especially 3.2.1, pp. 92-4 and “Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and Our Duties to Animals,” (in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, ed. Grethe B.

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Peterson. Volume 25/26 (2005). Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press; and on the Tanner Lecture website at:

[http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/documents/volume25/korsgaard\\_2005.pdf](http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/documents/volume25/korsgaard_2005.pdf)

pp. 85-87).

<sup>23</sup> See *Self-Constitution*, 6.2.1-6.2.5, pp.121, 6.4.1-6.4.2, pp.125-6

<sup>24</sup> See “The Normativity of Instrumental Reason,” and “Self-Constitution in the Ethics of Plato and Kant” (both in *The Constitution of Agency*), and *Self-Constitution*, especially 4.4-4.5 and Chapters 6-9.

<sup>25</sup> See *Self-Constitution*, chapter 5.

<sup>26</sup> I do not think it commits us to the view that every event has a cause.

<sup>27</sup> The ancestor of these arguments is Aristotle’s argument, at *Metaphysics* 4.41006a15, that you can get someone to agree to the principle of non-contradiction if you can just get someone to say something and *mean* something by it.

<sup>28</sup> I discuss the publicity of practical reasons in *The Sources of Normativity*, 4.2.1-4.2.12, pp. 132-45, and in *Self-Constitution*, 9.4.5-9.7.6, pp.191-206.

<sup>29</sup> In *The Sources of Normativity*, chapter 3, and in *Self-Constitution*. See especially 1.4, pp. 18-26 and 2.4, pp. 41-44.

<sup>30</sup> In *The Sources of Normativity*, 3.1.1, pp. 100-2.

<sup>31</sup> See *Self-Constitution*, 1.4.4.-1.4.6, pp. 20-2; 2.4.1-2.4.2, pp. 441-4.

<sup>32</sup> See *Self-Constitution*, 4.3-4.4, pp. 68-80, and chapters 7-9.

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<sup>33</sup> These arguments parallel the ones I made about the nature of volition in “The Normativity of Instrumental Reason.” those arguments treat “willing the means” as what I am here calling a “concomitant” of “willing the end.”

<sup>34</sup> It does not follow from the idea that believing is an activity in the sense described in the text that one simply can “decide to believe,” but then as I mentioned earlier, I don’t think that one can simply “decide to act” in the sense that would be parallel to the worrisome sense of “deciding to believe,” either.

<sup>35</sup> Kolodny, with his emphasis on “process” requirements, is an exception to this last point.

<sup>36</sup> This comparison will work for those who think that normative commitments are constitutive of promising, but not for those who think that the obligation of promising arises from the need to avoid certain harms or disappointed expectations. This is what I meant in note 9 when I said that these issues are all connected.