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Problems of Intellectualism: Raz on Reason and its Objects

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1. Introduction: Reason and Reasons

It can seem like a mere truism to say ‘Reason is the power to recognise and respond to reasons’, but, in fact, the question of the proper interpretation of this formula organises a fundamental philosophical dispute. The dispute is about the nature of a power, *Reason*, and its objects, *reasons*. The main tendency is to assign priority to one, and then to explain the other in terms of it. But do we enter the truism from the left or the right?

On a *left-to-right* or *power-to-object* reading, the formula is an explanation of what it is to be a reason in terms of the power of Reason. This explanatory direction requires a certain priority in the order of understanding. We must be able to conceptualise Reason, or again, its characteristic activities, without any need to appeal to the notion of a reason. This self-contained and prior fact of our own operation then provides the basis for an analysis of the concept of a reason. In accounting for reasons as a reflection or product of Reason in a world that does not really contain such things, such a view amounts to a kind of *idealism* about what a reason is: the ground of its being lies in us. What is the attraction of such a view? If we cannot adequately conceive of what a reason is except in terms of certain activities of mind—‘believing because ____’ and ‘acting because ____’—then reasons would not be indifferent facts, their ‘call’, ‘grip’ or ‘hold’ not that of an alien authority, and it would be no grace of fate that we operate as we have reason to.

On a *right-to-left* or *object-to-power* reading, the formula explains what Reason is in terms of a disposition to grasp an independently constituted domain of fact, namely, reasons. This explanatory direction also requires a certain priority in the order of understanding. Such a view presupposes the availability of the concept of a reason that does not make reference to the activities of Reason. At the limit, this comes to a kind of *sheer realism* about what a reason is: they are what they are quite independently of the power to operate with them. The ground of the attraction of such a view is that it represents our relation to reasons as cognitive: acts of Reason can be correct or incorrect, a matter of getting something right or wrong.

We know from philosophical reflection in various domains (perhaps most of all, in connection with moral reasons) that each of these readings also faces a *prima facie* objection: each seems unable to get hold of the ground of the attractiveness of the other. Sheer realism generates worries about how it could be anything other than sheer accident that we operate as we have reason to, while idealism generates worries about how it could be anything other than a

figment of the imagination that the order of mind displayed in, say, ‘believing because ____’ or ‘acting because ____’ is answerable to a standard and might display knowledge.

One of the powerful attractions of the approach pursued by Joseph Raz in his characteristically sane and illuminating treatment of these issues in *From Normativity to Responsibility* is that it promises to show us how to get off this particular philosophical seesaw without injury. Raz’s core idea is that we are not forced to occupy one side or the other: we can reject the sheer realist object-to-power reading of our truism without embracing the idealist power-to-object reading. Rejecting each of the conceptual priority conditions, Raz accepts instead a *no-priority* reading:

Reason does not make reasons into reasons (Reason is not a source of reasons). But they are reasons because rational creatures can recognize and respond to them with the use of Reason. (5/3)

The task of giving a real definition is displaced by the task of giving an illuminating description of the essential interdependence of Reason and reasons. This is the work Raz sets out to do. What follows grows out of a deep sympathy for this basic Razian insight. I believe Raz makes a compelling case that our search for philosophical comprehension of normativity must take this path. The questions I want to raise are about how to proceed once we have gone beyond the trailhead. I want to suggest that more needs to be done to mark the way, and to indicate where it leads. I try to bring this out by concentrating on a difficulty that Raz treats as tangential to his main concern—a difficulty about whether the account of our relation to reasons is over-intellectualised. My guiding thought is that *the problem of intellectualism* is not just some isolated hazard to be avoided, but a symptom of the main difficulty facing the no-priority approach.

2. The Standard Form of Explanation of Belief and Action: Two Requirements

Raz approaches these questions through reflection on ‘the standard form’ of explanation of belief and action.¹ This is the fundamental point of conceptual entanglement, and so also the locus of fundamental understanding. The standard case of ‘believing something because ____’ and ‘intentionally doing something because ____’ is explanation by normative reasons; it is equally

* For comments and discussion I am very grateful to Matthew Boyle, Triantafyllos Gouvas, Matthias Haase, Ulrike Heuer, Niko Kolodny, Ruth Massey, George Pavlakos, and Joseph Raz.

¹ For the sake of terminological convenience, I will speak of intentional action as simply ‘action’, unless the context requires greater specificity. Also, in what follows, I am setting aside Raz’s interesting treatment of certain states of feeling or emotion as the exercise of a rational capacity.

‘explanation mediated by our rational faculties’ (2/27). According to what Raz calls the *normative/explanatory nexus*, ‘it is a necessary condition of any fact being a reason that, when conditions are appropriate, it provides such an explanation’ (2/19), that is, explains what it is a reason for in the relevant way. And according to what we might call Raz’s *thesis of constitutive normativity*, belief and action are ‘essentially responsive to reasons’ (5/1), that is, such as to be explained in the relevant way. But what way is that exactly? In this section, I want to consider two attractive features of Raz’s conception of this form of explanation—features he describes by saying that reasons explain beliefs and actions *immediately* and *as reasons*. (If Raz is right, as I think he is, these features yield conditions of adequacy on an account of reasons explanation, and so I will often speak of the immediacy and cognition *requirements*.) Consideration of these will bring into view the core of Raz’s conception of Reason, of what it is a power to do. And this will put us in a position to see more clearly how intellectualist difficulties can arise for the no-priority view.

The immediacy requirement. The first requirement concerns the *immediacy* of the connection between recognising a reason for belief or action and forming the relevant belief or intending to perform the relevant action. In standard explanations of belief and action, Raz holds, the connection between the subject’s recognising a decisive reason to believe *p* or do *A* and her believing *p* or intending to do *A* must be direct and unmediated in the following sense: her transition from the former to the latter involves no further rational or cognitive step. In the case of belief, Raz captures this by saying that there is ‘no gap’ between the recognition of a sufficient reason and the formation of a corresponding belief: to recognise that some fact *f* is sufficient reason to believe *p just is* to believe *p*. As Raz puts it,

recognizing a sufficient case for a belief is adopting that belief. There is no separate step involved, no transition that, pathological cases apart, can fail. Properly recognizing epistemic reasons is properly responding to them. (5/11)

A related requirement applies to the case of intention: though not every case of recognising a sufficient reason for ϕ -ing need result in intending to ϕ , when recognising that *f* is a sufficient reason for ϕ -ing *does* explain intending to ϕ in the standard way, it must do so in such a way that no further rational step—no recognition that I should intend to do what I have sufficient reason to do or decision to do what I take myself to have sufficient reason to do—is required to explain moving from the recognition of the reason to forming the relevant intention: ‘even regarding

practical reasons, rational capacities must involve response to them if they are to involve recognizing them' (5/11).

The intuitive appeal of this immediacy requirement, for Raz, lies in the thought that Reason must be a power not merely to *recognise* reasons but actually to *respond* to them. To suppose that after recognising a reason a further step is required in order to respond in an appropriate way would be, as Raz puts it, to present an 'unduly passive image of our rational powers, just tabling reports, as it were, of what reasons are to be found where' (5/11). And indeed, it would be odd to think that one can reach a conclusion about what there is sufficient reason to believe or do, and yet still face a question about what to do to ensure that this is what one will henceforth believe or seek to do. If Reason is to be not simply a power to sit in judgment over what I *should* believe and should do, but a power to *make up* or *determine* my mind—one whose operations can by themselves explain the formation of specific beliefs and intentions—then it seems that recognising a reason for belief or action must typically *suffice* for actually holding certain beliefs or intentions. Raz's immediacy requirement captures this plausible constraint on a satisfying account of the relation of Reason and reasons.

The cognition requirement. Raz holds that there is a further significant condition of rationalising explanation of belief and intention beyond the immediacy of the connection between recognition and response. The power of Reason must be not merely a capacity to *respond* to reasons, but a capacity to respond to them *as reasons*, on the basis of a recognition that they recommend the relevant response. Not all responsiveness to reasons, indeed not all non-accidental responsiveness, meets this condition. For, as Raz observes, '[t]here can be, and sometimes are, capacities and processes that reliably lead to appropriate responses to reasons, without the mediation of rational powers' (5/1). Encountering a fact *f* that is a reason for a response of type *R* can cause a subject to produce response *R*, not in virtue of an appreciation of the reason-giving force of *f*, but by way of some 'reason-bypassing' process or mechanism. (Raz mentions the primitive tendency to eat when hungry and the instinctive avoidance of fire as cases of reliably responding appropriately to what are in fact reasons without mediation of rational powers.) By contrast, in standard rationalising explanations of a belief or intention by appeal to a reason, the connection between encountering a fact and forming the relevant belief or intention is not a matter of associative disposition or blind habit: it holds precisely in virtue of the fact that the subject appreciates the rationalising force of the fact at issue. Raz puts this by saying that the subject must recognise the relevant reason *as* a reason:

In their exercise of their rational powers, agents are led to awareness of the facts that are reasons *qua* reasons, and to rational reaction to this awareness. (2/30)²

Again, this conception of the role of reasons in standard rationalising explanations has strong intuitive attractions. It does seem that there is a difference between a brute dispositional way of being responsive to (what are in fact) reasons for belief and action, on the one hand, and a kind of responsiveness that genuinely reflects an appreciation of these reasons as rationalising. The latter responsiveness, it is natural to say, is a knowing, comprehending responsiveness: it reflects an appreciation *that* these facts are reasons (hence the naturalness of speaking of responsiveness to reasons ‘as such’). When I respond to a reason on the basis of *this* kind of capacity, my response does not merely accord with what the reasons would recommend; it reflects recognition that the reasons do recommend it. To capture the thought that standard explanations of belief and action by reasons presuppose this sort of knowing, comprehending responsiveness, we can call this further condition on such explanations the *cognition requirement*.

Raz presents these two requirements as not merely harmonious but as growing out of the same basic thought—that Reason is the power to recognise and (thereby) respond to reasons as reasons, and it seems to me quite plausible that, at the end of the day, an account of our power of Reason should meet both requirements. Nevertheless, I think there are difficult questions about how to accomplish this—in particular, there are *prima facie* worries about whether it is possible to give due acknowledgement to the cognition requirement without threatening the immediacy requirement. In what follows, I bring into view a few of these difficulties, and thereby help us to see more clearly what an adequate account of our power to recognise and respond to reasons would need to involve, and this in turn will raise a question about the adequacy of the account Raz has presented.

3. *The Problem of Intellectualism I: Psychological Implausibility*

There is a *prima facie* difficulty with the cognition requirement that Raz acknowledges and addresses: it over-intellectualises the capacities of ordinary rational subjects, requiring us to credit them with concepts it is doubtful they all possess. The cognition requirement is simply *psychologically implausible*.

² Where intention or belief is ‘reliably and rationally brought about’, Raz says on any number of occasions, it must be brought about by ‘belief in the fact that is a reason and include belief in its character as a reason’ (2/23); ‘reasons explain actions through the mediation of belief in the reasons *as* reasons’ (2/27).

Raz's most developed attempt to quiet intellectualist worries turns on a distinction between more and less demanding standards of concept possession, roughly the distinction between being able to operate with a concept in concrete judgments, and being able to operate on a concept in abstract reflection on its general conditions of application (including, for example, its logical relations of consequence and incompatibility). He thinks the intellectualism objection misfires because it assumes that in recognising and responding to reasons *as reasons* one must deploy stateable knowledge of the general principles constituting the concept of a 'reason', or again, that one must deploy a theory of what a reason is. But the assumption is false. It does not fall out of the general conditions of concept possession. To satisfy the cognition requirement someone need only meet the lower standard:

action for a reason requires ability to take certain facts to be reasons ... It does not require being able to think about reasons in the abstract. I therefore conclude that it is justified to say that the normative/explanatory nexus does not require excessive conceptual mastery, nor excessive conceptual knowledge. (2/27)

As Raz knows, intellectualist doubts about the cognition requirement (and closely related claims, such as the guise of the good) can arise from other sources. Still, even as they do, the form of Raz's reply remains the same: the appearance of any difficulty itself rests on an over-demanding and, as it were, over-intellectualised conception of what, in general, it is to possess and exercise a concept. In the service of such a point, Raz says that exercising a concept in a particular case of belief does not require any episode of conscious reflection (4/5), nor does it require having a word to express the concept (4/36). Indeed, at several points Raz seems to suggest that a person can be onto reasons *as reasons*, but not in virtue of having beliefs that explicitly deploy the concept 'reason', or again, in virtue of the concept 'reason' making a contribution to the content of a proposition believed. It would seem to be enough simply to respond to reasons in a certain way, and in so doing manifest an 'ability to take certain facts to be reasons'. The recognition is primarily exhibited in drawing conclusions and making choices in a reason-recognising manner or way, and not in affirming or believing propositions that represent something's being a reason for something.

It seems to me a fine move for Raz to insist that the tendency to over-intellectualise comes from his accuser's conception of what it is to recognise and respond to reasons as reasons, not from him. But I do not think it is enough simply to assert the possibility of a less intellectualised conception of the act of apprehending a reason without saying more to clarify what makes it a

responsiveness to reasons *as reasons* at all. In particular, we need to understand how, on the less intellectualised conception, we can still capture what made the cognition requirement attractive in the first place. I am not just saying that there is more work to do here. (Sadly (or happily?), there's always more to do.) My thought is that without it, the idea of explanation by normative reasons as a distinctive form of explanation—one in which 'reasons explain because they are normative reasons, and by being normative reasons'—threatens to recede from view. Still, I do not think the need for such clarification is obvious. So, with a view to making it palpable, I want to present two ways of developing the intellectualism objection—ways which show that it is not fundamentally an objection to the psychological plausibility of a certain proposal, but a difficulty with deeper roots.

4. The Problem of Intellectualism 2: Automatism vs Contemplativism

In this section I want to raise a doubt, in the form of a dilemma, about the compatibility of the immediacy and cognition requirements: opting for the former raises the threat of *automatism*, while opting for the latter raises the threat of *contemplativism*.

Automatism. If the apprehension of a reason is to explain belief or intention immediately or directly, it seems that it must *not* be recognised as such—at least if we interpret this in a certain, familiar way. It is natural to interpret talk of acts of recognising (identifying, detecting and discerning) something as something, *a* as *b*, on the model of ordinary acts of theoretical cognition. Here cognition is a matter of predicating or asserting something of something, of bringing something under a concept, as when I think, of my bicycle, that it is broken. For present purposes, we could equally characterise this conception as a matter of recognising *that a* is *b*, where '*a*' and '*b*' are essential constituents of the content of a proposition apprehended. Here, to recognise *a* as *b* is to think of *a* that it is *b*, or simply that *a* is *b*. And the present claim is that if we understand the act of Reason in such terms (as a matter of recognising a proposition of the form 'that ... is a reason ...', a proposition grasp of which requires the concept 'reason'), then reasons *cannot* be apprehended *as reasons*, if they are to explain immediately.

For the sake of simplicity, I will focus on the case of belief where the connection between recognition and response is tightest, and, as a result, where the dilemma comes out most clearly.³

³ Still, though it would require a more subtle treatment, a similar issue could be raised for the case of practical reasons and intention where, according to Raz, the connection between recognition and response is more complicated. As I mentioned above, Raz is happy to say that 'the formation of intentions is the exercise of one's rational capacities', and that intending to do something is a condition that can be 'secured via using our rational powers'. This is to acknowledge that intention must be something for which Reason can supply a complete account. But, at first glance, if judgment about reasons cannot on some occasions *be* intending—if none are, if there is always a gap—then Reason is not a power to respond, and

It seems that my believing that there is sufficient reason to believe p can constitute my believing p , only if these are *not* two distinct belief-contents. The difference has to be finer than the difference between distinct contents of belief. If the contents are distinct, then logically (conceptually, metaphysically) speaking there is a gap to cross, a transition to be made in thought. Perhaps in some psychological sense there is no gap—no transition is noticed. Still, one thing would have led to another, leaving open the possibility of another kind of creature operating with the same concepts which does notice the transition, for whom there is a gap. So, if the immediacy requirement is not simply a description of a contingent law of our psychology, the contents must not be distinct. Attributing to me the belief that there is sufficient reason to believe p must *not* characterise a further belief about what is so beyond my belief that p . It must, instead, be an elaboration on the nature of my believing that p itself.

Indeed, in some remarks, it appears that Raz opposes treating the recognition of reasons *as reasons* as requiring a further representation of something's being something—affirming an explicitly normative proposition, predicating 'reason' of something in an act of cognition.⁴ He seems to think, instead, that recognition of reasons *as reasons* is manifested, in the basic case, in responding to certain considerations by forming certain beliefs or making certain choices. In other philosophers, we can find extreme formulations of a thought along these lines. For example, John Broome says:

To reason you must have the first order linking belief that the conclusion follows from the premises ... The linking belief you must have in order to reason is *nothing other than your disposition* to derive the conclusion of your reasoning from the premises, and believe it. Of course you cannot reason unless you have this disposition. The linking belief is therefore implicit in the activity of reasoning, but a reasoner need not be able to articulate it explicitly. To reason, you must implicitly have the metapropositional concept *follows from*, but you need not be able to express this concept in language.⁵

thus, not a power whose acts determine what one intends. And it would be by focusing on this case, the fundamental case, that the practical variant of our dilemma would proceed.

⁴ Consider, for example, the following passage: 'The [Guise of the Good] Thesis does not assume that agents capable of intentional action must have the concepts used in stating the Thesis (the concepts of the good, intention, reason for action), nor does it claim that they believe that these concepts apply to each of their intentional actions. It assumes that they have a belief about their action that can be truly characterized as a belief that the action has a good-making property, one that constitutes a reason for the action, and that reason or their belief in it, explains why they perform the action' (4/6).

⁵ John Broome, *Reasoning*, unpublished manuscript, p 233 (on file with author); emphasis added.

But notice that Broome's formulation, at least, threatens to collapse the distinction between a merely dispositional responsiveness to considerations that are, in fact, reasons, and a responsiveness grounded in a recognition of reasons *as reasons*. His talk of *implicitly* having the concept or belief does not help to eliminate the threat of collapse. For here the attribution of implicit knowledge seems to be no more than an indirect way of describing behaviour: it is a way of saying that someone behaves as someone would who was knowingly following the concept. (I do not mean to object to the practice of attributing certain psychological states on the grounds of explanatory and predictive success. But we must distinguish between states of mind that essentially depend on an explanatory theory we apply, and states that are not constituted by being attributable in this way.) Thus, insistence on the immediacy requirement threatens to rule out the cognition requirement. Call this the *automatism horn of the dilemma*.

Contemplativism. If the apprehension of a reason is to be a *knowing* apprehension (as a reason), on the other hand, it is not clear how it can be immediately explanatory. In general, beliefs are individuated by their contents. And here we have, by hypothesis, a belief whose content is: there is sufficient reason to believe *p*. This is something other than a belief whose content is *p*. But if there is a gap between them, some cognitive transition (deliberation, reasoning, inference) is required to close it. And so, recognition of sufficient reason for believing *p* does not suffice for believing *p*. The immediacy requirement has not been met. Again, if no cognitive transition is required, it would seem that this must be because what it is to believe that there is sufficient reason to believe *p* is characterised in terms of the subject's forming the belief that *p* under certain conditions, and not as a further distinct content believed, a further fact apprehended. But then it is unclear how the cognition requirement has been met.

Compare the Lewis Carroll problem: Adding one more belief to the tortoise's list, to the effect that *p* and if *p* then *q* are sufficient reason for *q*, does not necessitate his drawing the conclusion *q*.

It just adds another thing for him to consider. If the grasp of two propositions is not such as to make for a rational relation between them, then the grasp of an additional proposition to the effect that one of the propositions is sufficient reason to accept the other does not seem to help. But, again, if adding another belief does more than put another proposition on the page, isn't that because this ostensible further belief is really just a matter of being disposed to respond to believing *p* and if *p* then *q* by believing *q*? And, if we do understand this belief simply as a disposition to operate in the relevant ways in certain circumstances, then haven't we lost access to the cognition requirement, and to the thought that it is the content of a representation that accounts for the non-accidental connection between ground (the reason to) and cause (the reason why)? And what, then, can it mean to say that reason-giving force is *grasped* or *known* as such?

Thus, insistence on the cognition requirement threatens to rule out the immediacy requirement, rendering Reason a capacity to merely contemplate one's own condition and judge it to be sound or unsound, a capacity for 'tabulating reports ... of what reasons are to be found where', as Raz says, and not itself a capacity to determine one's first-order condition, not itself a power whose acts are 'believing because ___' and 'intending to to A because ___'. Call this the *contemplativism horn of the dilemma*.

I do not claim that there is no way out of the dilemma, that we must choose between blind habit and idle contemplation. My aim is simply to raise a challenge, and thereby to motivate the demand for a positive characterisation of recognising reasons *as reasons*, in contrast to a merely a negative specification of what this need not involve. If the positive characterisation is to show us the way out, it must clarify, *first*, how this can be a genuine kind of cognition, one that would mark the intuitive distinction between a merely associative disposition and a genuinely rational capacity at the basis of the cognition requirement, but, *second*, that would not amount to the familiar sort of cognition that takes the form of a distinct belief about what is so, or that is a matter of bringing an object under a concept in the manner characteristic of ordinary acts of theoretical judgment.

As Raz knows, the cognition requirement will provoke the accusation of being over-intellectualised. But this is not, I think, fundamentally a worry about its being psychologically implausible. That is only the form the misgiving takes before getting its source into better focus. Underlying this initial formulation is the sense that, once the idea of recognising reasons *as reasons* has been detached from any connection to thinking a further content in which something is brought under the concept 'reason', it is not clear what anchors it at all.

5. The Problem of Intellectualism 3: Narcissism

Let us set aside worries about whether the apprehension of reasons *as reasons* can be an immediate or complete explanation of belief or intention. In connection with another familiar issue regarding the link between reason and motivation, I want to mention a further difficulty for the cognition requirement in the hope of bringing out, from another angle, the depth and pervasiveness of the problem of intellectualism.

Recall a well-known objection raised by Bernard Williams: that action issuing from deliberation structured by the impartial point of view could not exhibit genuine love or friendship. Such action, he famously says, would rest on 'one thought too many'.⁶ The history of moral

⁶ Bernard Williams, 'Persons, Character and Morality' in B Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

philosophy contains any number of cases in which a theory of rational deliberation is accused of supplying the agent with the wrong reasons: where deliberation is structured by self-interest, action cannot exhibit benevolence; even where it is structured by fellow-feeling in addition, action cannot exhibit justice. Such theories provide the agent with one thought too few. But the motivational interference Williams describes is of a different sort, not simply the absence of a first-order motive, or the occlusion of one by another, but the subordination of the real, concrete objects of concern to abstract principle. As Williams sees it, the impartial agent is moved by recognition of the normative status of his action (by the permissibility of saving his wife when others are also in need), and so not by direct, unmediated concern for, say, a friend or lover (not by the fact that this is his wife). Williams is not alone in such suspicions: consider Hume's portrayal of the agent acting from the motive of duty as ultimately concerned with managing his own good opinion of himself, or consider Michael Smith's claim that action from the motive of duty exhibits a kind of moral fetishism.⁷

These authors are focused on the way a specific concern with the moral status of one's own action threatens to alienate one from the concrete ends of life. But I want to suggest that the suspicion can be generalised: where deliberation aims at the recognition of reasons as reasons, and so where agents are motivated by the apprehension of the normative status of their actions, the true grounds of action recede from view. In their place we find a narcissistic fascination with one's own standing in the space of reasons. And this kind of scrupulous reason-weigher thinks 'one thought too many'. His deliberation is stiff and artificial in a way that specifically precludes his having the right kind of engagement with the first-order considerations that are, in fact, reasons for doing things (or believing things).⁸ His overriding concern is, so to speak, that his own responses to reasons be faultless—as opposed to being concerned to help Jones, or to avoid running over Smith, etc. His relation to reasons is alienated and narcissistic: focused not on the world that gives him reasons and is changed through his actions, but on himself and the reasons he has.

Again, this objection might be avoided with the right interpretation of the idea of recognising and responding to reasons *as reasons*. But what needs clarification is just this: What is the right interpretation? And again we face the same predicament as before. If we make it too 'implicit', we risk losing touch with the observations that made the phrase attractive in the first place. But if

⁷ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, LA Selby-Bigge (ed), PH Nidditch (rev) (Oxford University Press, 2nd edn 1978) 479. Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Blackwell, 1994) section 3.5.

⁸ For the sake of simplicity, I have developed this version of the problem of intellectualism in the restricted context of practical reasons. And while I think similar worries can be raised for the theoretical case, I won't try to develop the thought here.

we make it too ‘explicit’, the threat of narcissism reappears. This sort of objection to the cognition requirement may seem quite different from the previous one, but I want to suggest that they have a common root. These difficulties arise from a conception of what the recognition of reasons *as reasons* comes to on which this appears as a *further item* of cognition mediating first-order beliefs and intentions. A recognition of reasons *as reasons* that mediated in this way would get in the way of responsiveness to (what are in fact) reasons: it would prevent recognition of them from directly accounting for beliefs and intentions, and it would make whatever connection did obtain look oddly stiff or self-involved. I am certain that this is *not* how Raz conceives of the recognition of reasons *as reasons*.⁹ But the question I am trying to raise is: How, then, are we to conceive of it?

6. Conclusion: The Problem of Self-Consciousness

Let’s return to the no-priority reading of the truism about Reason and reasons. It is attractive to think with Raz that these are necessarily linked, though we cannot give a reductive account of one in terms of the other. But it seems that for a no-priority view to be defensible, the immediacy requirement and cognition requirement must be jointly satisfiable. If only the former is, we lose the idea that Reason’s engagement with reasons is a genuine case of recognition, and get dragged toward the power-to-object reading. If only the latter is satisfiable, we achieve the recognition relation at the expense of losing the necessary link to motivation, and get dragged toward the object-to-power reading. But, as I have been trying to argue, further work is need to show how the two requirements can be jointly satisfied. To repeat, I am not suggesting that this work cannot be done. I hope and believe that it can (though I don’t know how to do it). But I think it requires a positive elucidation of the character of our cognition of reasons that I cannot find in Raz, for all that I think there is to be learned from his book.

I want to end with a couple very brief and speculative remarks about what sort of work this would demand. The kind of difficulty presented by the cognition requirement is not unique to the debate surrounding Reason and reasons. Recurrently, in many areas of philosophy, we find the impulse to mark something distinctive about a rational subject’s relation to the world by appeal to a ‘qua’-construction. And so we find Brian O’Shaughnessy saying that while ‘animals know truths, but not their truth’, in a rational being knowledge of truths must be ‘*under the aspect of*

⁹ Passages such as these suggest as much: ‘it is the facts, the reasons themselves, that ultimately motivate’ (2/28); ‘To reiterate an earlier point: the claim is merely that saying that reasoners try to establish what reasons apply to them is a correct description of what they do. It is not that they necessarily do or even could formulate the aim of their deliberations in that way’ (7/5).

truth'.¹⁰ And we find Philippa Foot, following Aquinas, saying that while animals apprehend ends and means to ends, only a rational being recognises ends *as ends* and means *as means*. Making the same point in other terms, Foot says, 'while animals go for the good (thing) *that they see*, human beings go for *what they see as good*'.¹¹ And, following Aristotle, we might say that while a camera is simply affected by a visual image, I am affected by a visual image as something affecting me: 'we perceive that we perceive'.¹² Now, across these several domains, such formulations recurrently give rise to the sorts of difficulties we have encountered: difficulties about psychological plausibility, for one thing, but also the deeper difficulties about what these phrases can mean, and how someone who insists on using them can avoid a picture of rational activity that estranges a rational subject from the true and proper objects of concern, leaving him focused not primarily on the objective world (the world known by us and changed by us), but on his own justification before God, or himself as transcendental subject, or some notional philosopher looking on with approval.

What accounts for this? I think it is a problem about making sense of a mode of knowing that is appropriate to things that are not themselves the primary objects of our cognition, but fundamental aspects of our relation to those objects. This knowing must be distinct from the kind of knowing that characterises our relation to the determinate, intentional objects of theoretical and practical reason themselves, on pain of its 'getting in the way' of our relation to those in the sorts of ways I have been exploring. It must be a knowing of something *necessarily* nearer at hand. Just to give it a name, we could call the relevant mode of knowing 'self-consciousness'. The problem of understanding such self-consciousness is, I believe, the root of the various problems of intellectualism we have been considering.

¹⁰ Brian O'Shaughnessy, *Consciousness and the World* (Oxford University Press, 2003) 111.

¹¹ Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Clarendon, 2001) 53–56.

¹² The example is from LA Kosman, 'Perceiving that We Perceive: *On the Soul* III.2' (1975) 84(4) *Philosophical Review* 499–519.