ABSURD ANGST AND METAETHICAL PAIN:

THE EXTERNALIST MORAL PARADIGM AND ITS

PRODUCTION OF ANGST OVER THE NORMATIVE FORCE

OF ULTIMATE REASONS

By

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Too many, long dead and still living, have been crucial in pushing me to finishing this essay; the debts I owe are so diverse that they are inarticulable. My wife, perhaps most of all, deserves thanks: by showing love through my various episodes of angst, she has taught me how to love, radically changing the focus of my research and moral development.

"When I first knew you, you lifted me up, so that I might see that there was something to be seen, though I was not yet fit to see it. And you beat back the weakness of my sight, shining forth upon me your dazzling beams of light, and I trembled with love and fear."
(Augustine. *Confessions*, 7.10.16)

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Abstract: The purpose of this essay will be to set out an analysis of a certain philosophical, metaethical angst, which I call "absurd angst," defend angsty thinking (to the extent it can be), and offer up hopeful suggestions regarding consolation of this angst. In short, I take absurd angst to be a painful worry that there are no normative, non-instrumental reasons to act. This worry, it seems to me, can only come about under a certain moral conceptual scheme, and I will devote a large amount of time here to understanding it. This moral conceptual scheme leads the angsty to accept several non-trivial beliefs about the relationships between moral concepts and their application in true/accurate moral ascriptions. The angsty are led to these beliefs by, I think, a strongly ingrained set of moral concepts which form the basis of their moral system(s). Ultimately, I argue that absurd angst arises in some because the angsty possess moral concepts which lead them to believe either that normative reasons require external reasons (reasons which do not depend, in some critical way, on the internal evaluative states of agents), or that normative reasons require external sources of normativity (grounds or explanations for the normative force and authority of reasons which do not depend, in some critical way, on the internal evaluative states of agents) (these possibilities are not exclusive). This worries the angsty. First, because external sources of normativity are theoretically problematic, and this is felt to, in some way, make moral claims problematic. Second, because a host of painful consequences are thought to follow from a lack of these external sources and a denial of normative reasons to act.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

My purpose in writing has been to describe a particularly painful anxiety over metaethical theory. I have called this 'absurd angst.' This angst presents in many different ways, and so demands a careful treatment. Some describe their worry as regarding the 'objectivity' of morality; others seem to fear that anti-realist metaethical systems undermine the notion of intrinsic value. Worries over the 'meaning' of life are also frequently attested to. Each of these worries, however, are vague, and teasing out exactly what they amount to is no easy task. For instance, why would grounding intrinsic value in human psychology *undermine* the existence of intrinsically valuable objects? Why is 'objectivity' a necessary or desired feature of moral systems? Why do we worry about all these things?

To understand angst of this sort, we must answer these questions. My approach has been to unify all of these disparate worries by postulating a common cause: worries over meaning, objectivity, and anti-realism are all worries about the *reason backed nature* of morality. That is, the angsty feel threatened by certain metaethical theories because they take it that these theories are incompatible with having *normatively forceful* or *justifying* reasons to act. Others worry that objectivity is a necessary condition for justifying reasons. The various forms of internalism--any views which analyze reasons or moral properties as emerging from the internal, evaluative states of agents like us--are similarly felt to leave no room for moral reasons. My first suggestion, then, is that analyzing worries over metaethical theory in terms of reasons reveals to us the fundamental concern: a lack of normatively forceful or justifying reasons to act (Chapter I).

I have not argued for the unification of metaethical worries under worries over reasons. Rather, I have assumed it at the outset. I have described the intuitive notions of justifying or normative reasons, and have attempted to show *by example,* not by argument, that thinking about these problems in terms of worries over reasons can reveal much to us.

But this is only the beginning of the essay; the question still remains, '*why do we worry that there are no normative reasons to act?'* My explanation is simple: those who worry about moral reasons have adopted a conceptually rich moral paradigm, and this paradigm--or moral conceptual scheme--describes morality as ultimately relying on a set of reasons to act which are both justifying (normatively forceful) and non-instrumental. Further, this conceptual scheme features a commitment to externalism about reasons (the view that moral reasons are, in some significant way, independent of the psychological states of moral agents like us). That is, the angsty understand the notion of 'justifying, non-instrumental reasons' to contain the notion of psychological-independence (though exactly what this independence amounts to is a complex issue best left for the essay). Angst sets in, on my view, when those who have already internalized this paradigm discover the theoretical difficulties surrounding it. Absurd angst is the painful worries over an involuntary paradigm shift, similar to the worries regarding a shift from Ptolemaic to Copernican astronomical models. The angsty moral paradigm might be expressible in part by visual representations of the great chain of being, though a full explication of this thought would require too much time. Most notably, the angsty find themselves unprepared to answer the question: *'what are external reasons, and do they exist?'*

This way of thinking about and understanding normative claims regarding 'reasons' is not necessarily derived by the angsty through inference or intuition. I make no claim to understand how this conceptual scheme comes to be so strongly held by the angsty. However, it seems to me that the angsty do in fact 'see moral claims and concepts' through this externalist lens. Just as we might adopt conceptual models to make sense of and predict events in the perceptible realm, I posit that the angsty have adopted a model for moral thinking and

deliberation. The moral conceptual scheme of the angsty *is just* their set of concepts which they utilize when making, interpreting and evaluating moral claims. The critical aspect of this paradigm is understanding 'moral justification, 'the 'justification of reasons to act,' or 'the normative force of reasons' as requiring independence from mere human preferences.

This conceptual scheme is not assumed to be *necessary* or universal, but, on the contrary, I find it plausible to think that one can abandon or modify these mental models with enough effort. Further, I make no attempt to show that this moral paradigm is *correct,* or *ought* to be adopted by all. Rather, after roughly describing the moral paradigm of the angsty, I offer a set of arguments which are meant to illustrate the plausibility of the angsty conceptual scheme to all (Chapters II-IV). These arguments are *not* meant to show that normative, non-instrumental reasons *must be* conceived of as *external* reasons. For, even if all these arguments went through, one would still be free to adopt a *different* concept of moral justification. One could, in fact, insist that we adopt a new, internalist concept of normatively forceful reasons, even while admitting that our 'common sense' concept of moral reasons requires externality. What could, in principle, we say in response? Why think that the angsty model of reasons is the only viable understanding? At best, my arguments are intuition pumps, revealing to my reader whether or not they find the angsty moral paradigm attractive. At worst, my arguments are mere conceptual analyses of the angsty concept of normative, non-instrumental moral reasons.

After having contented myself with my description of the angsty moral paradigm, and with my explanation of metaethical angst, I moved to offer up some hopeful suggestions regarding consolation of this angst (Chapter V). In short, I sketched what consolation would require: either preservation and reaffirmation of the angsty moral paradigm (by overcoming the relevant theoretical difficulties), or revision and replacement of that paradigm (due to those theoretical difficulties warranting abandonment of the angsty paradigm). Finally, I close this essay by offering up a few rhetorical moves the angsty can make to overcome the relevant theoretical issues: internalist thinkers have provided compelling arguments which remove the

skeptical problems surrounding normative thought; further, theistic-reliabilist models of moral

knowledge may allow us to bypass skepticism regarding the metaphysics of moral 'entities' like

reasons or value, especially if claims to divine revelation can be warranted.

PREFACE

Just prior to finishing undergraduate work, I found that I had become increasingly anxious about the authority of my moral and aesthetic beliefs. Beliefs regarding the activities which filled my life with meaning and about the artworks which I cherished--both kinds of my most important value-judgements--suddenly seemed to be totally unjustified. Those close to me didn't see the value in my pursuits, and any suggestion that there might be normative, aesthetic standards was taken as a dangerous insult. My appeals to the concept of "intrinsic value" and what intuition might indicate, having forced us to consider at least *something* as intrinsically valuable, fell on deaf ears; some even confessed to have *never thought about intrinsic value*, and claimed to have been unaware of the concept. This painful moral disagreement confused me: how could the moral statuses I, with total confidence, ascribed to objects worthy of my love seem to have no weight in the minds of my peers? I would have preferred to encounter moral *disagreement* rather than total moral *apathy.* For how could the judgements of my more thoughtful peers be backed by moral authority, given that their judgements appear to be totally *irrelevant* to so many?

Finally free from undergraduate busy work, I turned to focus on major metaethical and aesthetic issues full-time. But the greater number of sources I tucked under my belt, the more clearly I began to realize that my anxiety was terribly confused: what exactly was I worried about? Concerns about the potential subjectivity or even *relativity* of moral and aesthetic standards did not fully capture my worries.

Neither did any cliche worries over the "meaning of life." There seemed to be something more fundamental underlying these sorts of concerns, but I could not identify it on my own. Understanding this vague, philosophically induced angst became the first issue I would have to deal with. Did other, more self-aware philosophers also feel this way? Had any others come to understand this angst, and had they found any source of consolation?

I am now convinced that many others suffer from this same philosophical angst. T.M. Scanlon has identified a shift in metaethics towards questions of normativity and reasons, and away from analysis of the meaning of moral claims.[1] This shift, I take it, has come about due to an increased awareness of, and perhaps angst over, the problems surrounding normativity. I am not, however, fully satisfied with any analysis of this angst that has been put forward. Even worse, I have not found a metaethical theory which can fully or satisfactorily console, once one is aware of the (conceptual) causes of their angst. The contemporary author who has come closest is Christine Korsgaard, and, in her analysis of the "normative question," she describes a skeptical worry over normativity that I feel lies at the heart of the angst in question.[2] However, I take it that Korsgaard has not, in her work, devoted enough time to exploring in full detail the thinking which produces this angst, and does not explicate, especially for those not in its throws,

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[1] "Contemporary metaethics differs in two important ways from the metaethics of the 1950s, 1960s and even the later 1970s… Today, although morality is still much discussed, a significant part of the debate concerns practical reasoning, and normativity more generally: reasons for action, and, even more broadly, reasons for belief and other attitudes, which are increasingly recognized as normative, and as raising questions of the same nature as those about reasons for action" (Scanlon, T.M. *Being Realistic About Reasons*).

[2] (Korsgaard, Christine. *The Sources of Normativity.)* Nagel, in (Nagel, Thomas. "The Absurd.") also puts forward a highly similar analysis of the absurd. His conception of absurdity--or, in my terms, absurd angst--is of a worry about a lack of reasons or normative significance to human life, caused an epistemic situation of inescapable doubt over moral claims. This epistemic situation arises from the foundational nature of all cognition--we cannot get beyond first principles--and moral knowledge, or our moral systems, rest also on foundational claims/evaluations. Since these are self-justifying, but not certain or strongly self-evident, one can always doubt them. My account is highly similar, as an epistemic problem (how do we decide whether normative reasons exist?) fuels a worry that the world is absurd. My account, I think, is a synthesis of Camus (who viewed the absurd as a metaphysical conflict between human aspirations and reality) and Nagel (who viewed the absurd as a primarily epistemic conflict between human aspirations and reality). In my terms, Nagel tells us the cause of absurd angst, in part, and Camus tells us about the sort of world which we worry about in absurd angst--an absurd world.

the *importance* of this philosophical angst. Further, Korsgaard's consoling solution to the normative question is, I think, ultimately unsatisfactory precisely because it does not confront the (conceptual) causes of angst over the normative question.

The purpose of this essay, then, will be to set out an analysis of this philosophical angst, which I call "absurd angst," defend angsty thinking (to the extent it can be), and offer up a potential means of consolation. In doing so, I will show that the sorts of concerns raised by Scanlon and Korsgaard are not only recent, but have been plaguing thinkers prior to the metaethical shift Scanlon has described. In short, I take absurd angst to be a painful worry that there are no normative, non-instrumental reasons to act. This worry, it seems to me, can only come about under a certain moral conceptual scheme, and I will devote a large amount of time here to understanding it. This moral conceptual scheme leads the angsty to accept several non-trivial beliefs about the relationships between moral concepts and their application in true/accurate moral ascriptions. The angsty are led to these beliefs by, I think, a strongly ingrained set of moral concepts which form the basis of their moral system(s). Ultimately, I argue that absurd angst arises in some because the angsty possess moral concepts which lead them to believe either that normative reasons require external reasons (reasons which do not depend, in some critical way, on the internal evaluative states of agents), or that normative reasons require external sources of normativity (grounds or explanations for the normative force and authority of reasons which do not depend, in some critical way, on the internal evaluative states of agents) (these possibilities are not exclusive). This worries the angsty. First, because external sources of normativity are theoretically problematic, and this is felt to, in some way, make moral claims problematic. Second, because a host of painful consequences are thought to follow from a lack of these external sources and a denial of normative reasons to act.

So, conceptual analysis of (what I take to be) the conceptual scheme underlying absurd angst will take up a large part of this paper. I will explicate the moral concepts and conceptual

commitments of the angsty, and will also do my best to explicate the lines of thought which lead them to their metaethical, angst-inducing beliefs.

The consoling solution I briefly offer up towards the end of this paper is that justified belief in *at least* revelatory, Abrahamic religions can justify our belief in whatever sorts of metaethical entities (ie external reasons or external sources of normativity) we deem to be necessary for moral truths. This will be accompanied by a brief discussion of the *function* of religious belief in writers like James and Kant. In laying out religious belief as a means of consolation, I will have to defend it against obvious objections, and describe and evaluative alternative, metaethical accounts which seek to console. I will not be too concerned with showing that rival accounts are insufficient for consolation--I welcome, for my own sanity, as many rival, metaethical theories which purport to console as possible. The only need to argue for the inadequacy of these rival theories is that they seem to be inconsistent with the moral conceptual-scheme shared by the angsty, and so cannot console the angsty without major revision of moral concepts.

That last caveat (that certain metaethical accounts can only console given a revision of the angsty conceptual scheme) should raise a red flag for my reader, however. One might suggest that the angsty, in order to console themselves, should do away with their deeply ingrained moral concepts. For these concepts are, after all, the causes of absurd angst (at least once the person disposed to angst is made aware of them and gives themselves to reflecting on them). I have no objection to this line of thinking, except that, first, I seem unable to do away with the angst-inducing moral concepts without incurring more angst, and, second, that this suggestion begs the question against the angsty conceptual-scheme's accuracy. That is, while one may be able to rid themselves of angst by ridding themselves of the moral conceptual scheme that produces angst (and thereby, while retaining their form, modifying the contents of their moral beliefs significantly), *if the faculty which utilizes those concepts to produce the original moral beliefs is reliable* (given to forming true beliefs)*,* then one *should not* do away with

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those moral concepts. Doing away with the concept of normative reasons which requires external sources of normativity may, then, prevent one from pursuing the truth, just to make the angsty feel more comfortable.

Overall, my suggestion is that one cannot simply seek to do away with these angst-inducing moral concepts, at least if one already has them. First, one must do their best, to avoid begging the question, to check whether or not these concepts and the moral beliefs which utilize them are true or capable of being used to form true, moral ascriptions. If these concepts are not truth-relevant, then, perhaps, we can safely throw them out to console ourselves. Still, I am suspicious of this suggestion, because, though it is beyond the scope of this essay, I feel that moral beliefs utilizing *these angsty concepts* are the only sort that can console the angsty (including myself).[3]

What this introductory discussion should reveal to my reader is that all I purport to do in this essay is to explicate absurd angst and the thinking behind it. I will (continue to) operate under the angsty, moral conceptual scheme, and evaluate metaethical accounts in light of it. But just as, in my view, we cannot defeat the global skeptic who raises the possibility that our most basic concepts and cognitive processes are not fit to describe reality,[4] we cannot do much to counter the suggestion that the angsty moral conceptual scheme might not be the only one, or even an accurate one. One can always ask, for instance, "why care about normativity at all?"

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[3] This is not to say that an ability to console should count as evidence for some metaphysical position. I point this out merely to defeat the suggestion that the angsty should swap out their moral conceptual system to avoid angst. In sum, this suggestion, when offered up without argument, (1) begs the question against externalist moral realism, and (2) is motivated by practical concerns which may not be helped even if one went along with the suggestion.

[4] Kant, though not a skeptic, argues that theoretical reason can never deliver knowledge of the truly real-- the unconditioned--because there is no reason to think that our concepts and faculties line up with how the world really is, independent of our perception and conceptualizations. In fact, there seems to be good reason to suspect that this is impossible. Kant argues that there is a contradiction (or at least a tension) between supposing that one can apprehend the unconditioned. For apprehension of the unconditioned would be to apprehend the unconditioned *through* conditioned thought. But then one is thinking of a conditioned subject in conditioned thought… (Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason,* B16-B17, B20, B119, B127). For an introduction to this interpretation of Kant, see: (Allison, Henry. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism.*)

And one can always suggest that, maybe, if our moral concepts and faculties were slightly different, we could perceive a source of normativity or normative reasons which would console our angsts without external sources of normativity. That is, if we were slightly differently arranged, perhaps we would "see" that our longing for normativity is really a longing for this something-else which is already within our grasp. For instance, one might think that, if our concepts and faculties were different, we would not longer crave an external source of normativity at all. Or, perhaps, if our perspective from which we observe rational agents like us and experiences with them were different, we would give more normative weight to the internal states of agents like us, thus finding that internal sources of normativity are sufficiently weighty to supply us with normative reasons, and thereby finding that we have no need, from this new point of view, for external guarantors for normativity. That is, perhaps the only reason that the angsty have developed a concept of normativity which includes externality is that they negatively evaluate agents like themselves, and feel the need to defend themselves against their untrustworthy kin by positing an external arbiter--"normativity." Still, the converse might be entertained: perhaps those who are satisfied with merely internal accounts of normativity are only so satisfied because they surround themselves with like minded people, sheltering themselves from the experience of painful moral disagreement and the morally apathetic. Thus, I do not suppose that this conceptual scheme is universal--perhaps its non-universality might explain the behaviors and beliefs of violent sociopaths and other types of wantons.

All that I have to offer here is an analysis of a kind of metaethical angst, in which I lay out the causes of this angst, what this angst consists in, and what a consoling solution to this angst would require. I am *not*, to be clear, attempting to survey all the metaphysical, epistemic and practical problems for the moral realism which the angsty desire (other works have done this well),[5] nor am I putting forward a thorough solution. Instead, I am trying to state, fully and in one

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[5] Again, see Scanlon and Weilenberg for surveys of these issues, and see WIland for a survey of analyses of reasons-talk.

place, angst over the normative question (as it relates to reasons), and to show why one with this angst might not be consoled by the internalist theories so prevalent in contemporary metaethics. In light of our analysis, we may throw out our concepts which cause our angst, or revise them, perhaps making new concepts from the old. Or, if our concepts are vague enough, we need not revise them, but simply show that the things we thought they corresponded to do not, in fact, exist. We may then, since our concepts are so broad, seek other candidates for correspondence which would align with them. Or, perhaps, we can console ourselves by changing our desires. But these solutions to absurd angst deserve many pages, and I am not prepared, nor do I wish, to comment on them in detail.

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CHAPTER I

ABSURD ANGST, ANGSTY THINKING AND EXTERNALISM

(I.1) Absurd Angst and Non-Instrumental Reasons

(I.1.1) Introduction to Absurd Angst

To study absurd angst, I start by briefly examining two thinkers who clearly articulated their

suffering under this angst: Camus and Tolstoy. In *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Camus describes an

absurd world. It is, using his terminology, a world where a handful of our most intense desires

and central goals are frustrated by the non-rational nature of the world. We desire knowledge

and understanding of the world as it is apart from ourselves,[1] profound reasons to live,[2] and a

home-like world in which to live.[3] An absurd world (which our world is, per Camus) is a world

where none of these desires can be fulfilled due to the constructed and purely human nature of

knowledge, understanding, rationality, reasons and significance. It is a world where "all thought

is anthropomorphic."[4]

Per Camus, we might come to recognize that the world is absurd after asking the

question, "is life worth living?"[5] This realization is painful, alienating us from the world, and

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[1] Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, 21, 23.
[2] Camus, 6.
[3] Camus, 17.
[4] "Understanding the world for a man is reducing it to the human, stamping it with his seal. The cat's universe is not the universe of the anthill. The truism, 'all though is anthropomorphic' has no other meaning.'"(Camus, 17.)
[5] Camus, 3.

breaking the illusion that we are at home in it. We might, after becoming aware of absurdity, continue living and "making our gestures," but we will have realized that living and engaging in human activities are merely "ridiculous habits."

But, surely, pain doesn't set in from merely raising the question, "is life worth living?" Perhaps the answer is positive, after all! What, then, causes a *painful* response to the question? Per Camus, it is that, upon raising the question, we look around for a *reason* to live, and can find none, which then leads us to believe that there are no such "profound reasons for living."[6] Further, Camus takes it that the anthropomorphic nature of rationality and reasons rules out the existence of "profound reasons for living," as if such reasons require an external guarantor.[7]

This lack of reasons to continue living follows, per Camus, from Camus' doctrine of projection (that rationality and so reasons are human constructions, projected onto the world). For Camus there is no aspect of the world as it is in itself which could provide a source or ground for reasons to live, since that would require an external world somehow matched to rational, human conceptual structures. But the world does not contain these anthropomorphic properties.[8] So, if we are to once more anthropomorphize the world and ask it for an answer to our question ("is life worth living?"), it would stare coldly at us or apathetically shrug. In less metaphoric terms, there are no *reasons* to live or die in or stemming from the world in itself-- nothing in the world can provide reasons to live or die; there is no source external to humanity that can ground or provide compelling reasons to live. When awareness of this lack hits, it strikes with the force of a painful angst.

Tolstoy seemed to recognize a highly similar source of reasons-based angst, describing it as follows:

> *Five years ago something very strange began to happen to me...I felt lost and became dejected…Then these moments of perplexity began to recur oftener and oftener, and*

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[6] Camus, 6.
[7] Camus, 6, 17.
[8] Camus, 6, 17.

always in the same form.[9]

I could give no reasonable meaning to any single action, or to my whole life...Today or tomorrow sickness and death will come to those I love or to me; nothing will remain but stench and worms...Then why go on making any effort?[10]

My question—that which at the age of fifty brought me to the verge of suicide—was the simplest of questions, lying in the soul of every man...it was a question without answering which one cannot live.[11]

What will be the outcome of what I do today? Of what I shall do tomorrow? What will be the outcome of all my life? Why should I live? Why wish for anything, or do anything? Is there in life any purpose which the inevitable death which awaits me does not undo and destroy?[12]

Had I simply understood that life had no meaning, I could have borne it quietly, knowing that was my lot. But I could not satisfy myself with that. Had I been like a man living in a wood from which he knows there is no exit, I could have lived; but I was like one lost in a wood who, horrified at having lost his way, rushes about, wishing to find the road.[13]

We might be tempted to think of Tolstoy as worrying about "the meaning of life," but what he might mean by "meaning" is unclear.[14] What is clear, however, is the question he asks several times: "in the face of death, why go on making any effort?" "Why should I live?" "Why wish for anything, if I end up dead?"

"Why questions" are normally requests for *reasons.* When we ask *why* we ought to do something, we are typically asking to be made aware of the reasons which support our acting in that way. Asking such questions, Tolstoy is very plausibly searching for answers in the form of reasons. He rushes about like one lost in a wood, but cannot find any consolation, just as Camus' angsty individual, upon raising these same questions, becomes pained by their inability

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[9] Tolstoy, Leo. *A Confession,* 13.
[10] Tolstoy, 17.
[11] Tolstoy, 21.
[12] Tolstoy, 21.
[13] Tolstoy, 19.
[14] Some writers have analyzed philosophical, metaethical angst as primarily an angst over "the meaning of life." For an example, see: (Zhao, Michael. "Meaning, Moral Realism, and the Importance of Morality."). Meaning, in my view, however, is simply a casualty of denying normative reasons. That is, the primary worry of the angsty is that there are no normative reasons, *because,* in part, if there were no such reasons, life would be meaningless, etc. (See Chapter IV of this essay)

to discover any "profound reasons for living." The worry, or angst, for both authors, is that there are no "profound" or "good," which I take to mean *justifying* or *normative,* reasons to do anything at all.

I am seeking to understand one aspect of Camus' absurd angst--the aspect of angst that Tolstoy and Camus both share: a worry about a lack of good reasons for living or engaging in what is otherwise thought of as valuable or meaningful human activity.[15] For Camus, this lack is implied by the anthropomorphic nature of rationality and value. For Tolstoy, our inability to answer the simplest of questions (to point to reasons to live, etc) indicates that there are no such reasons. Again, there is probably more to absurd angst than I describe here, but to understand the angst regarding the absence of reasons to do anything at all (from here called absurd angst) is enough. I seek only to understand why a worry emerges from our "longing for happiness and for reason."[16]

(I.1.2) The Notions of Normativity and Normative Reasons

But what is meant, here, by "normative reasons" and "normativity?"[17] Like most of our important, non-trivial concepts, our concept of normativity is largely understood by reflecting on its functions. Normativity, for our purposes, is that component of moral principles and reasons to act which provides authoritative forcefulness--that authority and force which most of us pre-theoretically feel backs morality. That is, normativity is that which makes moral principles and reasons to act compelling, forceful and obligatory. It is that element of morality and reasons which allows them to *justify* rather than merely explain. And it is the component of morality and reasons which we feel makes justified demands on us. What exactly this normative force

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[15] I am construing "moral claims" broadly to involve claims like "life is worth living," "my life has value," etc. It seems arbitrary to me to include "Emily has value" and "Emily should be respected as an end herself" as moral, but not "I have value," "my life is valuable." For each of these judgements appear to be judgements about what we have reason to do, or what things have normative significance.
[16] Camus, 28.
[17] Korsgaard's *The Sources of Normativity* is the standard jumping-off point for discussions of normativity and sources of normativity. Much, if not most, of what I say here is pulled directly from her first chapter, titled "The normative question."

consists in, however, is mysterious, and part of the difficulty the angsty face arises from its mysterious and vague nature.

From these functional features of normativity (or functional properties of the sort of thing which our concept of normativity seeks to describe), we can see that our concept of normativity is likely of a property, particularly a property of moral claims and reasons to act. This property sets certain claims and reasons apart from other, non-normative claims and reasons.

Under this terminology, we can describe absurd angst as a worry that there are no normative (good or profound) reasons to live or to act at all.[18]

(I.1.3) The (Instrumental) Import of Normative Reasons

I think, now, that the general nature of absurd angst is clear: it is a painful worry that there are no normative reasons one may cite to provide satisfying answers to the questions, "why value or seek anything at all?" and "Why live, or exert any effort?" But what has not been made clear is *why* the angsty place such importance on possessing reasons to act. Why care about having reasons? What about a lack of reasons causes some to become angsty?

In Chapter IV, I will give a list of painful consequences thought to follow from denying the existence of normative reasons (and thus anything necessary for them). Here, I can only describe one type of instrumental import that the angsty assign to normative reasons: they are necessary for the truth of our closely held moral claims, and so the consolation that their truth might provide. In short, moral principles and ascriptions of moral properties are important for a consolation which preserves happiness and motivation to act in the face of pain and death, and competing interests. We console ourselves by supposing that our pains have positive *value.* When we cannot convince ourselves that our pains *themselves* are valuable, we preserve our

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[18] Over the course of this paper, no more will be attempted than to draw out other necessary features of our concept of normativity and normative reasons, and to discuss what these features show about our moral conceptual system. Our intuitions (dispositions to believe certain things about normativity) will be taken as a sign that the things which we are drawn to believe betray featured of this concept.

motivation and ward off despair by supposing that are instrumental in reaching some other valuable state, or that, overall, the fight through pain is beautiful, good or valuable from an ideal perspective: a moral perspective where we can see the true value of all subjects. In the face of our death and finitude, we attribute moral properties like "significance" to ourselves, our lives, pursuits, and the objects we take to be valuable. The angsty despair when they are unable to convince themselves that their sufferings, achievements, and lives have positive moral properties.

(I.1.4) The Angsty Conceptual Scheme and Angsty Conceptual Commitments

I suggest that, for those like Camus and Tolstoy, there is a tight conceptual link between normative reasons and moral truths.[19] That is, Camus and Tolstoy are both inclined to pre-theoretical *moral rationalism*.[20] It seems to me that, before we poison ourselves with philosophical doubt, we normally take it for granted that true moral claims (ascriptions of moral properties and imperatives) provide for or point to powerful *reasons* to act in certain ways-- reasons that survive awareness of our painful mortality and conflicts arising from the (alleged) incompatibility of morality and self-interest. These sorts of reasons stemming from or associated with moral statuses I will call "moral reasons" from here. Moral reasons are normative, in that they justify, compel or warrant action. From here, unless otherwise stated, "reasons" will refer to *normative* reasons. In sum, the angsty feel that, if we are able to truthfully attribute consoling

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[19] I speak of "the truth of moral claims" loosely here. I recognize at least two distinctions in moral claims or moral truths--ascriptions of moral properties and imperatives. It is not clear to me that moral imperatives are able to be true or false, and I'd like to avoid this issue altogether here. When I speak of the truth of moral claims/truths, I mean to speak of at least the truth of moral ascriptions, and the normativity/authority of moral imperatives.

[20] "Moral rationalism is the claim that moral obligations are or entail sound practical reasons for action" (Shafer Landau, Russ. *Moral Realism: A Defence,* 48). In my view, moral rationalism can be construed more broadly than this. One might take rationalism to hold for moral truths in general, or for only particular kinds of moral truths, like truths about obligations. Moral truths can be divided, it seems to me, at least into ascriptions of moral properties and imperatives. To be a rationalist about either is to hold that the truth of moral ascriptions and imperatives (or the normativity of moral imperatives, if one does not think imperatives are truth apt) entail normative reasons to act in accord with those moral ascriptions and imperatives. What it means to act in accord with moral ascriptions is not obvious, but for the sake of this discussion, we might say that to act in accord with an ascription intrinsic value is to value the intrinsically valuable subject as an end in itself, or regardless of its utility, etc.

moral statuses on subjects, then there must be normative reasons to value, pursue or seek those subjects. This is why the angsty fear and are pained by our question: they feel that, without normative reasons, their beliefs about the consoling and motivating moral properties of their ends, actions and objects would be false, and that the moral principles they live by (imperatives) would be unjustified and uncompelling (without normative force).[21]

Given that one accepts that correct ascriptions of consoling and motivating moral properties involve ascriptions of normative reasons, one comes to find, upon reflection, that a chain of normative reasons makes up their structure of moral reasoning. As Tolstoy does, we might ask ourselves, "why bother to Φ?" That the question "why Φ?" is a request for justifying or compelling reasons to Φ seems nearly indubitable; again, in Tolstoy and Camus, this is explicitly affirmed, and the angsty should be trusted somewhat to analyze the meaning of their questions. In response to "why Φ?," we posit some moral property of Φ-ing which is supposed to offer a justifying reason to Φ. But we can quickly discontent ourselves by raising the question again: "why care about that moral property? Why should that compel me to Φ?" A series of instrumentally valuable or instrumentally good subjects backing up our Φ-ing will be posited in an attempt to hit on, and rest in, a good, compelling or justifying reason to Φ as a satisfying answer to our first question: "why Φ?" Instrumental values or goods invoke or provide instrumental reasons. But this regress of moral properties and moral reasons cannot go on forever--eventually it must end in a valuable or good subject which we can no longer discontent ourselves with by asking "why care about Ψ? Why should Ψ compel us to Φ?" This chain, then, must terminate in a non-instrumentally valuable or good subject. And, since we were initially asking for *reasons,* we feel that this non-instrumentally valuable or good subject will be the

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[21] This is in itself a controversial endorsement of moral rationalism. If one can justifiably deny the conceptual link between normative reasons and consoling/motivating moral properties, then one can, perhaps, justifiably attribute consoling and motivating moral properties to subjects which are not supported by normative reasons. But if one, like myself, finds that, upon introspection, their moral concepts (such as intrinsic value and obligation) necessarily contain a certain relation to normative reasons, then the philosophical problem to be described seems unavoidable.

ultimate source of our reasons to Φ.[22] This ultimate or final subject will be such as to provide a reason to Φ. The form of a satisfying answer to our initial question (why bother Φ-ing?) is that there is some Ψ which we have reason to do without invoking any other reasons, and that this reason to Ψ provides, perhaps indirectly, a reason to bother Φ-ing. That is, to satisfy a request for a reason to Φ, we must posit a final, non-instrumental reason--a reason which is not dependent on or derivative from a further morally good subject or reason. This is one way to ask Korsgaard's "normative question." That is, if one accepts the intuition that there must be normative reasons behind moral properties, such as obligations and normativity, to ask the normative question (in this way) will be to go down this chain of instrumental and non-instrumental reasons.[23]

I ask, for instance, why I should not murder my wife (for what *reasons* I have not to do so). Putting considerations of my wife's intrinsic value to one side and assuming I do not like my wife, I say, first, because I would be caught, and this would result in unhappiness and suffering in prison. But why care about this? Because it undermines my other goals (to be happy, to have a new marriage outside of prison, to play with my dogs at home rather than looking at photos in prison). But why care about undermining my other goals? Because I value my goals. But why does my valuing my goals provide me with a reason to not undermine them? Why should I value or pursue my goals at all? Why not live a life of inconsistency, in which I learn to take joy in undermining my long-term goals in favor of my short-term goals? I can see no reason to act in accordance with my goals other than the fact that I have already adopted them. Worse, even if I cannot help but to adopt them, perhaps because rational agents like myself cannot avoid

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[22] Parfit argues along these lines, declaring that "it is from intrinsic reasons that all instrumental reasons get their force." (Parfit, Derek. "Rationality and Reasons," 24.)

[23] Korsgaard defines the normative question as such: it is to ask whether or not any evaluative claims are truly normative. The normative question is asked when one asks of an evaluative claim, "must I really do this? Why must I do it?" If one interprets "why" questions as requests for reasons, then, when one answers "why Φ?" by positing a subject with a certain moral property, this betrays their view that moral properties provide or invoke normative reasons. And so the regressive questioning begins!

pursuing their own self-interest, I recognize that my valuing them may be arbitrary. For, presumably, logical or metaphysical necessity of my adopting certain ends doesn't seem to capture the *normative* or moral necessity I am after here. Similarly, if I appeal to my wife's intrinsic value, I suppose that this value provides me with, or indicates that I already have, a reason not harm her. I appeal to some final end--my wife herself--and this end, I am inclined to say, is backed by reasons. Though I may *feel* that there is such a reason, I can easily doubt that this is nothing more than a feeling, and recognize that feelings do not necessarily provide compelling, moral reasons. I recognize that there is difficulty in identifying my ultimate reasons for action, since it seems coherent to doubt that an appeal to the intrinsic value of our ultimate ends is sufficient for providing compelling reasons to set them as our ends. I am pained by this difficulty as it leads me to doubt that there are any final or ultimate reasons undergirding my subsidiary ends, and that doubt, in turn, leads me to doubt that there are any subsidiary (instrumental) reasons *altogether.*

To clarify, the angsty (pre-theoretically) believe that they have normative reasons to act in various ways. Surely, also, the angsty operate under the concepts of instrumental and non-instrumental reasons--they believe that they have some reasons to act in virtue of the action's utility, and that, for other actions, they have reasons to do them regardless of the actions' utility (utility broadly construed as conduciveness to some other end). But once the angsty begin to interrogate their existing beliefs by asking whether they really have reasons to act in those ways, they become *disappointed.* The angsty *expected* to find something more than they are able to--they expected that what they believed themselves to have reason to do would either be supported by further, instrumental reasons, in the case of actions which they had only instrumental reasons to perform, or that they would be self-justifying (non-instrumental reasons). And when they reflect on what these reasons could be, they realize that they have believed in some final or ultimate set of actions supported by a final or ultimate set of non-instrumental

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reasons, and that these sets ground, support or justify all their subsidiary, instrumental reasons to act.

The angsty, never having given much thought to the structure of their common sense moral system, have lived under the assumption that there is a set of final or ultimate reasons waiting for them;[24] that, if they were to devote time to understanding the nature of morality, these foundationally supporting reasons would be accessible.

I think that this sort of disappointment betrays another belief the angsty assent to besides moral rationalism: instrumental reasons, if they do not go on supporting one another forever, must be supported by non-instrumental reasons. And, perhaps, another: instrumental reasons cannot go on supporting one another forever. This would essentially force the angsty to further believe that, if there are any normative, instrumental reasons at all, then there must be normative, non-instrumental reasons as well. Since the instrumental/non-instrumental dichotomy seems to exhaust all kinds of reasons, the angsty conclude that, if any normative reasons exist at all, then non-instrumental reasons must exist.

I have followed a chain of "reasons-to" up to a place where I ask for reasons to value or seek the things I do value and seek in/for themselves (I request non-instrumental reasons). I interrogate the things I feel are intrinsically valuable for a reason to value or pursue them. But I cannot *see,* or confidently *feel*, any reasons to value them, or how an appeal to their intrinsic value might provide such reasons--it is always coherent to doubt, especially in the face of death.[25] I may always ask myself whether I *really* have reasons to act, love, value, cherish, or

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[24] Tolstoy again echoes this. He says that "why?" questions would occur to him, but that he would accept, naively, that the answers were out there already--that he could, if he wanted, come to understand the readily accessible foundations of morality. That, as he put it, moral progress was carrying him toward some valuable end, even if he was not sure, in this present moment, what that end consisted of. He writes, "Everything is developing, and I am developing; the reason why I am developing in this way will come to light, along with everything else" (Tolstoy, Ch. III).

[25] As Nagel notes, some feel that "because we are going to die, all chains of justification must leave off in mid-air: one studies and works to earn money to pay for clothing, housing, entertainment, food, to sustain oneself from year to year, perhaps to support a family and pursue a career--but to what final end? All of it is an elaborate journey leading nowhere." (Nagel, Thomas. "The Absurd.")

refrain. I can't see, taste, hear, touch or apprehend "reasons" by convincing magical ability, after all. I seem to worry over this as a result of unknowingly adopting an angsty principle of justifying (normative) reasons: reasons to seek subsidiary ends and value the merely instrumentally valuable depend on the reasons conferred by higher, intrinsically valuable ends. Unable to shake this principle, at the end of this interrogation, I either have to admit that there *are no* reasons to desire, work, live, or be moral, or that these reasons terminate in a set of final reasons that, mysteriously, are not explicable by positing more ends backed by additional reasons to pursue those ends. This allows us to begin cataloguing our angsty conceptual commitments. Each of the following beliefs (labeled "CCs" for "conceptual commitments") describes or betrays an analysis of moral concepts which the angsty seem to possess and utilize.

> CC1.   True ascriptions of moral properties require that there are normative reasons to act in accord with those ascriptions.[26]
> CC2.   The normativity of moral imperatives requires normative reasons to act in accord with those imperatives.
> CC3.   If there are any normative reasons at all, then there must be normative, non-instrumental reasons.

This incomplete catalogue of conceptual commitments on the part of the angsty shows that absurd angst is produced by a non-trivial set of commitments. I will, shortly, expand upon this catalogue. It may be that the widespread suffering of absurd angst betrays just how widespread these commitments are among reflective people, at least pre-theoretically.

(I.2) The Problematic Externality of Normative Reasons

(I.2.1) Intro. to the Problem with Normative, Non-Instrumental Reasons

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[26] Note that CC1 and CC2 split "moral truths" into two categories: ascriptions of moral properties and moral imperatives. The angsty feel, overall, that "moral truths" require normative reasons. For precision, and because the "truth" of moral ascriptions and moral imperatives are not clearly the same sort of thing, I have separated the claim into CC1 and CC2. This bypasses the suggestion that moral imperatives are not "truth apt," and describes the angsty as only committed to worrying about the *normative force* of moral imperatives. It is in this sense that moral truths require normative reasons: the truth of moral ascriptions require normative reasons, and the normativity of moral imperatives require normative reasons.

A brief recap is in order: under our angsty conceptual scheme, if there *are* normative reasons undergirding the ultimate rules, ends and values of our moral systems, they are either instrumental or non-instrumental. However, instrumental reasons appear, on this conceptual scheme, to be necessarily parasitic on non-instrumental reasons, so that, if there are normative reasons undergirding our moral systems, then there must be a set of non-instrumental reasons. We badly desire normative, non-instrumental reasons, but cannot confidently confirm that they exist. We are plagued by doubts, and when we become aware of this difficulty, we worry that there are no such things as non-instrumental reasons, and so no normative reasons at all. We fear this will result in the collapse of our moral system altogether, instilling us with a deep unease, and destroying our moral motivation in the face of suffering and conflicts between morality and self-interest.

But at this point, one might wonder where the *philosophical* problem lies. If the truth of important moral claims, the justification of our will to live, and the existence of normative reasons requires normative, non-instrumental reasons, why not just grant the existence of normative, non-instrumental reasons? What reasons (ha) could we possibly have not to?

The difficulty in accepting the existence of normative, non-instrumental reasons stems from a few features of reasoning about reasons and another conceptual commitment on the part of the angsty. First, one can always question whether there is *really* a reason to act. Even if we *really feel* that we have normative, non-instrumental reasons to, say, positively value conscious life, we can always stir up doubts within us. Reasons are not empirical, and there seems to be no contradiction in the claim "reasons do not exist." Do our moral *feelings* and *inclinations* justify our belief in the existence of normative, non-instrumental reasons?[27]

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[27] Korsgaard writes, "The difficulty here is plain. The metaphysical view that intrinsically normative entities or properties exist must be *supported by* our confidence that we really do have obligations. It is because we are confident that obligation is real that we are prepared to believe in the existence of some sort of objective values. But for that very reason the appeal to the existence of objective values cannot be used to support our confidence" (Korsgaard, Christine. *The Sources of Normativity,* 40.). And Foot writes, "Just

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Second, there are those who seem to so profoundly disagree with us (in both beliefs and behaviors) that they appear to be unmoved by, or unaware of, the reasons we find so important. How, one might ask, can one continue to believe, if one, to believe, must admit that they take themselves to be in touch with something ("reasons" or whatever supplies reasons) that many others are not? This is not merely a worry about being *elitist.* Rather, wouldn't we expect similarly constituted creatures to have the same inclinations to respond to identical stimuli (whether that be reasons themselves or the states we take to constitute or give rise to reasons)? So, if there really were such a thing as normative, non-instrumental reasons which prompt us to value them, then why would other beings like us--even from the same cultural contexts--seem to have totally different moral inclinations toward them?

Third, and this is where the most difficult metaphysical troubles enter, it seems that we (the angsty) already (pre-theoretically) believe that normative, non-instrumental reasons must be backed by external guarantors--that is, normative, non-instrumental reasons must, in some important way, be backed by a normativity which is not merely *human.* which are independent of our internal evaluative states (desires, beliefs, pro-attitudes).[28] To this last difficulty I turn now.

(I.2.2) Externalizing Normative Reasons

This third difficulty raised by the supposed externality of normative reasons is not a simple matter. For one, in what way do the angsty feel that normative reasons must be "external?" The angsty have, no doubt, some drive to externalize (make independent of human psychology in some important way) normative reasons. Tolstoy seems to find consolation and reason to live

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as one may feel as if one is falling without believing that one is moving downward, so one may feel as if one has to do what is morally required without believing oneself to be under physical or psychological compulsion, or about to incur a penalty if one does not comply...There is no difficulty about the idea that we feel we *have* to behave morally, and given the psychological conditions of the learning of moral behavior it is natural that we should have such feelings. What we cannot do is quote them in support of the doctrine of the categorical imperative" (Foot, Phillipa. "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives.").

[28] For an overview of the different accounts of reasons, see: (Wiland, Eric. *Reasons.*)

only by coming to believe in God as a reason-giving source or as a sort of external guarantor of morality.[29] For angsty thinkers like this, that reasons and rationality are backed only by *merely human* (merely internal) sentiments undermines their forcefulness, and disqualifies them from being profound or good reasons to live. This conviction that an *external* source or guarantor is necessary for reasons to be normative, however, is not uncontroversial, and it may be motivated by a mere *feeling* that the evaluations of agents like us are, on a grand scale, worthless.[30] Furthermore, the recent literature on theistic metaethics shows a deep concern with the external foundations of morality. For many theists, no internal source of morality is felt to do. It may even be, as I will argue in subsequent Chapters, that religious belief is motivated by a desire to preserve belief in normativity by indirectly reassuring the angsty that there are such external sources of normativity.[31]

But if the angsty feel that normative reasons, especially non-instrumental reasons, require some external component--some component independent of our limited, human sentiment--what would this component be? There are two ways in which we might apply concepts found in contemporary metaethical literature to make sense of the angsty drive to externalize. First, we might understand the angsty as claiming that at least some reasons, particularly normative, non-instrumental reasons, must be external reasons. Second, we might understand the angsty as claiming that at least some reasons, particularly normative, non-instrumental reasons, require external sources of normativity. To understand these two

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[29] Tolstoy writes that he could no longer accept the consensus of his learned peers, or even all mankind, as sufficient to provide reasons to act. For he, reflecting on witnessing public executions, described himself as recognizing a need for an external grounds of morality. "I realized that even if all the people in the world from the day of creation found this to be necessary according to whatever theory, I knew that it was not necessary and that it was wrong. Therefore, my judgments must be based-on what is right and necessary and not on what people say and do..." (Tolstoy, Ch. III.).

[30] Note that requiring external sources for normative, non-instrumental reasons is *not* the same as requiring non-instrumental reasons to be external or categorical.

[31] See, for instance: (Adams, Robert Merrihew. *The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology.*) (Craig, William. "The Most Gruesome of Guests.") (James, William. "Lectures IV-VII." In *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*) Indeed, for James and Adams, belief in God seems to allow the believer to also believe in the goodness of the world and whatever that goodness requires.

interpretations, which are not exclusive, I must give a taxonomy of reasons and sources of normativity (as understood in the contemporary literature).[32]

(I.2.3) A Taxonomy of Reasons

Instrumental reasons to Φ are reasons to Φ had in virtue of Φ being conducive to Ψ. Non-instrumental reasons to Φ are reasons to Φ had independently of Φ's conduciveness to any other end. Internal reasons to Φ are reasons to Φ which depend on the agent with those reasons having certain *internal* evaluative states that are promoted by Φ-ing. External reasons to Φ are reasons to Φ which do not depend on the agent with those reasons having any internal evaluative states which are promoted by Φ-ing. An agent has an internal reason to Φ only if the agent has or would have, under certain conditions, internal evaluative states in favor of or promoted by Φ-ing. I take this dependence to at least involve dependence on agents having actually adopted certain ends or forming certain evaluations which Φ-ing accords with; that is, an internal reason of an agent depends on that agent's adoption of certain ends which Φ-ing is conducive to bringing about.[33] External reasons do not have such a dependence.

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[32] The substance of this taxonomy can be found across the following authors, although their terminology may differ, in addition to how they make sense of the notion of "internal evaluative states." (Williams, Bernard. "Internal and External Reasons.") (Parfit, Derek. "Rationality and Reasons.") (Shafer-Landau, Russ. "A Defence of Categorical Reasons.") (Foot, Philippa. "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives.") (Luco, A.C. "Non-Negotiable: Why Moral Naturalism Cannot Do Away with Categorical Reasons.")

[33] What "having internal states in favor of or promoted by Φ-ing" amounts to, however, is difficult to cash out. Internalists will have varying views on which internal states are relevant, and I find it best to keep the discussion as general as possible. I find, however, that archetypical internalists are united in thinking that having internal states promoted by Φ-ing requires adopting or be disposed to adopt some end which Φ-ing is conducive to bringing about or constitutive of. The "internalism requirement" endorsed by many requires that reasons must be capable of motivating, and it seems plausible to assume that capability to motivate requires an ability to speak to the already adopted ends of agents. So, for those who accept this requirement on reasons, an agent's reasons to Φ require that the agent has adopted some end which Φ-ing is conducive to bring about (or else these reasons would be unable to motivate). Korsgaard, for instance, endorses this requirement and posits that all rational agents *actually* adopt certain ends due to the inevitability of adopting a view of their own identity, and that from the act of adopting these ends emerge reasons and obligations. Other thinkers which endorse this requirement are Williams. Thus, I think it justified to say that internal reasons are reasons which depend on the ends adopted by agents with those reasons. See: (Korsgaard, Christine. "The Normativity of Instrumental Reason," 201.) and (Williams, Bernard. "Internal and External Reasons.")

This taxonomy permits of various combinations of instrumental/non-instrumental and internal/external reasons. At first glance, we have *internal-instrumental, internal-non-instrumental, external-instrumental and external-non-instrumental* reasons. For our purposes, the sorts of reasons relevant are internal-instrumental, internal non-instrumental and external non-instrumental. We may put to the side the notion of external, instrumental reasons, as nothing hinges on an analysis of them. I construe ***internal-instrumental reasons*** as reasons to Φ which depend on Φ-ing's conduciveness to Ψ, and Ψ's being (actually or counterfactually) desired or sought by the agents who possess these reasons. I take ***external-non-instrumental reasons*** to be reasons to Φ which do not depend on Φ-ing's conduciveness to Ψ, nor Ψ's being (actually or counterfactually) desired or sought by the agents who possess these reasons. These external-non-instrumental reasons, if they are had at all, may be had regardless of our internal, evaluative states regarding Φ (the means) or Ψ (the ends). ***Internal-non-instrumental reasons*** I take to be reasons to Φ depending on an agent's *actually* or *counterfactually* valuing or positively regarding Φ (some end or subject), but which are independent of Φ's utility to the realization of some further end, Ψ.

Finally, two more conceptual divisions can be made, providing us with two sub-categories of internal reasons. First, ***actual-internal reasons*** are reasons to Φ which depend on the *actual* desires, commitments or evaluative states of agents with those reasons, and ***counterfactual-internal reasons*** are reasons to Φ which depend on the desires, commitments or evaluative states agents with those reasons would have under some ideal set of conditions. An agent has an actual-internal reason to Φ only if that agent has actual-internal evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing. An agent has a counterfactual-internal reason to Φ only if that agent would, under some ideal conditions, have internal evaluative states promoted by Φ-ing. In the

jargon of contemporary metaethics, both external and counterfactual-internal reasons are *categorical.*[34]

But here an ambiguity might bother attentive readers--in what sense of dependence have I divided reasons by? Here it seems best to me to make two further conceptual divisions: between logically and metaphysically internal or external reasons (the latter of which is more interesting). Logically internal reasons, both actual and counterfactual, depend on the internal states of agents in the sense that certain agents having certain internal states is a necessary condition for their existence. And logically external reasons do not *logically* depend on any agents having any internal states, actually or counterfactually.

Logically external reasons, however, probably do not exist. Both Strong Externalism about reasons (the view that *all* normative reasons are external--independent of the internal states of agents) and Externalism about Non-Instrumental Reasons (the view that *all* normative, non-instrumental reasons are external) would be very clearly false, if one meant by "external reasons" merely *logically external* reasons. Against both forms of externalism, consider the plausible claim that, if there are normative reasons to be moral, then I would necessarily, if I was under ideal conditions which forced me to be perfectly moral, have internal evaluative states in favor of being moral. It seems coherent, then, to suppose that some normative reasons, even non-instrumental ones, depend on the fact that agents with those reasons would form internal evaluative states in favor of acting in accordance with those reasons, under some ideal conditions. No matter how trivial this logical dependence is, it seems that these naive forms of externalism are false.

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[34] In the way used by Landau and Foot: (Shafer-Landau, Russ. "A Defence of Categorical Reasons.") (Foot, Philippa. "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives."). Hypothetical reasons refer to reasons dependent on one's actual evaluative states (*if* you have these states, *then* you have this reason). Categorical reasons refer to reasons independent of one's actual evaluative states, and thus includes both external and counterfactual-internal reasons.

Rather, I suggest that the more interesting kind of conceptual division, at least for our purposes, is of that between *metaphysically* internal and *metaphysically* external reasons. Metaphysically external reasons would not depend on the internal states of agents in the sense that the internal states of agents are not necessary causes of them. That is, taking causal relations to include constitutive or grounding relations, metaphysically external reasons are causally independent of the internal evaluative states of agents like us. While such external reasons may have internal states as a necessary condition of their existence, they are not constituted by them, and the causal story behind their existence. Metaphysically internal reasons, however, are causally dependent on such internal states. Unlike logically external reasons, metaphysically external reasons do not seem to be as easily dismissed as non-existent, and so I take them to be much more interesting.[35]

Note that, under our definitions of external and internal reasons, an external reason is a reason which does not depend on the internal states of reason-having agents. That is, an external reason might be had by an agent even though that agent does not have any actual internal state in favor of Φ-ing; its being had by an agent does not depend on that agents internal states. However, this leaves open the possibility that an external reason might still be dependent on some internal states. Consider, for instance, my reason not to throw my harmless pet snake at my mother. Though this reason, in my view, does not depend on my internal states in favor of not throwing my snake, and does not depend on my disposition under ideal states, it still does depend on the internal states of my mother: if my mother was not terrified by snakes, I would presumably not have such a reason. This example is meant to illustrate what I mean by an external reason: it is a reason to Φ an agent has which does not depend on what *that* agent

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[35] The distinction between logical and metaphysical dependence seems to be at the heart of the Euthyphro dilemma. For the problem Euthyphro poses is this: given that whatever the gods prefer is good, and vice versa (logical dependence), how do we explain goodness? Is goodness explained by the gods' preferences (metaphysical dependence on preferences), or sources external to them (metaphysical dependence on "The Good")?

actually or counterfactually thinks or feels about Φ-ing. External reasons are not divorced from the desires and internal lives of agents like us, exemplified by the dependence of my external reason on my mother's internal evaluative states. Rather, external reasons are meant to guard against the often wicked nature of our internal states, preventing reasons from being overridden or wiped from existence due to the seemingly ever changing preferences of human beings.

Once more, reasons are external or internal *relative to the reason-having agent*. An agent has an external reason when their having that reason does not depend on their internal states, though it may depend on the internal states of another agent, which is external to the. An agent has an internal reason when their having that reason does does depend on their internal states.

Applying the more interesting of these concepts to the angsty, the angsty might worry that normative reasons, in some way, require the existence of metaphysically external reasons. But, looking around for reasons which do not depend on the internal, evaluative states of agents like us requires much metaphysical speculation, and the angsty might quickly become disappointed and fearful once they realize that their moral systems rest on such a speculative and unclear foundation.

(I.2.4) The Concept of Sources of Normativity and a Taxonomy

With a taxonomy of reasons out of the way, I turn to explore the concept of a "source of normativity" and give a taxonomy of the different kinds of sources there might be.

There seem to be a few principles about normativity which are highly intuitive. Consider the following:

> *Some claims and reasons are normative, and some are non-normative.*

> *Some claims and reasons are normative in themselves or because of the actions they describe or recommend, while others draw their normativity from other sources.*

For an instance of the first sort of judgement, we might judge that the claim "thou shalt not murder" is truly normative, while "thou shalt enjoy *Gossip Girl*" is not. And, regarding reasons,

we commonly make distinctions between reasons which explain *why* we did something and *why we were justified* in doing something, as in recognizing the division between "I am faithful to my wife because I feel no one else will have me" (an explanatory, motivating, non-normative, internal and psychological reason), "I am faithful to my wife because no one else will, indeed, have me" (an explanatory, non-normative, non-internal and non-psychological reason), and "I am faithful to my wife because I have promised to be so" (a supposedly normative reason). Absurd angst, summed up as a worry that there are no "good or profound" reasons to live, is a worry that there are no reasons of this last kind--*normative* reasons.

As for the second kind of judgement, we might suppose that "thou shalt give to the Redcross" is normative only because giving to the Redcross will, at the current time, do the most good, and, if there were some better charity, this claim would not be normative. The claim is judged to be normative only in relation to another claim ("giving to the Redcross will currently do the most good") or state of affairs which the claim does not describe (the state under which giving to the Redcross will do the most good). We might speak of that further claim or state of affairs as a "source" of normativity (I will return to this shortly). At the same time, we might also judge that "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is always normative (it always has normative force) regardless of one's circumstances, or that one always has a normative reason to love one's neighbor as oneself, just because to love one's neighbor as oneself is good or valuable, or will always be conducive to attaining some further good or valuable end.

Again, one might judge that "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is itself sufficient for normativity--that the claim is normative in itself--or that what is described by it (the act of loving thy neighbor as thyself) is sufficient for making either the claim itself normative, or for providing us a normative reason to act in accordance with the claim. Or one might judge that it's positive utility-relation to some other end, when paired with the goodness of that other end, is sufficient for normativity.

It is in this sense that we might call some state, reason, claim or entity a "source of normativity:" a source of normativity for x is simply some y which explains why or how x is normative. For instance, a source of normativity for a reason is some y which explains why or how this reason is a normative reason, or why/how this reason has the normative force which it does. Sources of normativity are not restricted, then, merely to logically sufficient or necessary conditions for normativity, but might be metaphysical "grounds" or (constitutive) causes of the normativity of imperatives and moral claims.[36]

As explanations, grounds, or (constitutive) causes of normativity, sources of normativity might be sufficient or insufficient. **Sufficient sources** of normativity are considerations[37] which, by themselves, suffice to make a reason, imperative or claim normative.[38] An **insufficient source** of normativity is a consideration which, though it may contribute to the normativity of (or contribute to the explanation of the normativity of) reasons, imperatives and claims, it is not, by itself, sufficient for their normativity. Only when taken with an additional consideration can an insufficient source hope to suffice as a source of normativity.

One might make, for sources of normativity, a similar conceptual divide as those between internal and external reasons. **External sources** of normativity are sources of normativity which do not depend on the internal, evaluative states of agents, whether they be *actual* or *counterfactual* internal states (states which agents actually have or which they would have under ideal conditions). And, of course, internal sources of normativity are sources of normativity which depend on the internal, evaluative states of agents, of which there are two

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[36] For an overview of how the metaphysical notion of grounding might be applied to metaethical explanation, see: (Väyrynen, Pekka. "Grounding and Normative Explanation.")

[37] I use the term "considerations" to refer to any object, event, state of affairs, proposition, property, or action which might be posited as a source of normativity.

[38] Alternatively, one could say that a sufficient source of normativity for reasons is *not* sufficient for making a reason normative (as if the reason was had already, but needed to be made normative), but instead is sufficient for bringing a normative reason into being (whatever "bringing a reason into being" might mean).

kinds: ***actual-internal sources* o**f normativity and ***counterfactual-internal sources*** of normativity.

As in our taxonomy of reasons, externality is defined perspectivally. External sources are external *from the perspective of* the agent who normativity is forceful upon. Internal sources are internal *from the perspective of* the agent who normativity is forceful upon.

A reason metaphysically depending on a source of normativity means that the normative force of that reason on an agent metaphysically depends on some other consideration, fact, state of affairs, or entity. In the case of dependence on internal sources, the normative force of a reason to Φ on an agent depends on their having internal states in favor of Φ-ing. In the case of external sources, dependence would mean that the normative force of a reason to Φ on an agent depends on some entity external to that agent, which potentially includes the internal states of other agents.

Perhaps the angsty, possessing this concept of sources of normativity, worry that the existence of normative reasons requires the existence of sources of normativity which do not depend on the human mind. That is, perhaps the angsty worry that without external sources of normativity, there would be no normative reasons.

(I.2.5) Summary of the Angsty Conceptual Scheme

To summarize what has been said so far, the angsty worry that there are no normative, non-instrumental reasons serving as foundational supports of all other reasons, moral ascriptions, and moral imperatives. But the thinking producing the angsty worry is fuzzy. Clearly, the angsty are caused to worry because they feel that normative, non-instrumental reasons require an external component. But what does this mean? Applying contemporary metaethical concepts to angsty thinking, we arrive at two, non-exclusive possibilities: the angsty feel that normative, non-instrumental reasons must be external reasons, or the angsty feel that they require external sources of normativity. Two conceptual schemes might be given to explain absurd angst, then, and both may be at play in the minds of the angsty. Both schemes share the first three

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conceptual commitments already discussed (CC1-3), but add their own distinct commitments to

them.

CC1.   True ascriptions of moral properties require that there are normative reasons to act in accord with those ascriptions.

CC2.   The normativity of moral imperatives requires normative reasons to act in accord with those imperatives.

CC3.   If there are any normative reasons at all, then there must be normative, non-instrumental reasons.

CC4.   Normative reasons must be either internal or external.

CC5.   Normative, non-instrumental reasons (at least those which support our ultimate moral ends, claims, beliefs) cannot be internal.

CC1*.   True ascriptions of moral properties require that there are normative reasons to act in accord with those ascriptions.

CC2*.   The normativity of moral imperatives requires normative reasons to act in accord with those imperatives.

CC3*.   If there are any normative reasons at all, then there must be normative, non-instrumental reasons.

CC4*.   If a reason, a moral principle, or some other subject is normative, then there is a source of its normativity.

CC5*.   Sources of normativity are either internal or external.

CC6*.   Normative, non-instrumental reasons (at least those which support our ultimate moral ends, claims, beliefs) cannot have merely internal sources of normativity.

If one accepted the conceptual commitments listed above, one would infer, under the first set,

that normative, non-instrumental reasons must be external reasons, and, under the second set,

that normative, non-instrumental reasons require external sources of normativity. But, because

justifying belief in external reasons and external sources of reasons seemingly involves difficult

metaphysical speculation, the angsty have put themselves into a corner, making their ethics

depend on their metaphysic. And, given the regress problem and the problem of moral

disagreement/apathy (described in I.2.1), the angsty have reason to think that there are no

external reasons or sources of normativity.

Note that my explanations of absurd angst also serves to explain philosophical angst

over moral anti-realism and reasons internalism. For, on anti-realism, there seems to be no way

of making sense of external reasons or external sources of normativity, while internalism about

reasons and sources of normativity is just the denial that such sources exist. As Joshua

Blanchard writes, the worry over anti-realism, while not always clear, is a worry about the

"character of morality."[39] On my analysis of absurd angst, the worrying characteristics of our moral systems are (a) that the truths of our moral systems requires external components, and (b) that the external components of these systems are theoretically problematic.

What I've offered throughout this Chapter, then, are two different sets of conceptual commitments that can serve as explanations of absurd angst. Under each conceptual scheme, painful and unsavory consequences follow. In the next two Chapters, I lay out the reasoning of the angsty for holding to these conceptual commitments, particularly CC5 (Chapter II) and CC6* (Chapter III).

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[39] Blanchard, Joshua. "Moral Realism and Philosophical Angst."

CHAPTER II

WHY EXTERNALIZE NORMATIVE, NON-INSTRUMENTAL REASONS?

(II.1) The Angsty Arguments for CC5

The angstys' concept of "normative, non-instrumental reasons" clearly, then, involves either the concept of external reasons or external sources of normativity. But either of these views raise a difficulty for the angsty: it is very hard, if not impossible, to justify belief in normative, non-instrumental reasons if one feels that they must be external in either of those ways. That is, if one is inclined to think that normative, non-instrumental reasons are external or draw their normativity from external sources, then any moral theory which does not recognize sources of normativity independent of the psychology of human-like agents will be unsatisfying; and yet, the existence of external sources of normativity seems a difficult, if not impossible, thing to confirm (for the perhaps naive reasons given in Chapter (I.2.1)), leaving one in a painful skepticism about morality. For just what *is* an external source of normativity? What are reasons at all, if they are not tightly bound to our internal evaluative states? [40]

As I described in Chapter (I), absurd angst might be explained by two sets of conceptual commitments. The first set of conceptual commitments are reproduced below.

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[40] I borrow this phrasing of the question from Williams. Williams points out that "reasons" are taken to be things which agents like us can act upon or for, and can apprehend. Reasons without talk of the mental seems strained. (Williams, Bernard. "Internal and External Reasons.")

CC1.   True ascriptions of moral properties require that there are normative reasons to act in accord with those ascriptions.
CC2.   The normativity of moral imperatives requires normative reasons to act in accord with those imperatives.
CC3.   If there are any normative reasons at all, then there must be normative, non-instrumental reasons.
CC4.   Normative reasons must be either internal or external.
CC5.   Normative, non-instrumental reasons (at least those which support our ultimate moral ends, claims, beliefs) cannot be internal.

But it is still unclear *why* the angsty would take on such a burdensome and painful view of reasons. Below, I defend CC5 by putting forward several arguments in its favor, thereby explicating why the angsty are committed to the externality of normative, non-instrumental reasons.

(II.2) The Modest Argument from Moral Escapability (MC)

Many philosophers have devoted considerable time to arguing that categorical reasons (reasons which are unconditional, and therefore which must be either external or counterfactual-internal, since actual-internal reasons are always conditional upon agent's possessing certain evaluative states) are necessary, at least under our current moral framework.[41] Russ Shafer Landau's arguments--some of the clearest in the literature--attempt to show that an unsavory relativism would follow from a denial of categorical reasons. For, if actual-internal reasons were the only sorts of reasons backing up, constituting and forming our moral reasons, obligations and blameworthiness, then, given a variety of actual-internal states, moral reasons, obligations and blameworthiness might be significantly varied. One could, in short, escape having

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[41] The sorts of arguments to follow occur in too many sources to list exhaustively. Joyce gives a compelling argument illustrating the tight link between categorical moral reasons and obligation (Joyce "The Myth of Morality"). Luco picks this up and develops it further (Luco, A.C. "Non-Negotiable: Why Moral Naturalism Cannot Do Away with Categorical Reasons."). Shafer-Landau also gives variants of these relativistic arguments (Shafer Landau, Russ. "A Defence of Categorical Reasons."). And, even Joyce—an error theorist--gives his own variant, and considers external reasons to be an *obviously* necessary component of morality (Joyce, Richard. *"The Myth of Morality,"* 26.) The variants offered below, though heavily influenced by Shafer Landau, diverge in their argumentation, and adopt my taxonomy of reasons given above. Again, they also argue for a more narrow conclusion--that *external* reasons are required for obligation, blameworthiness, etc.

normative reasons to be moral simply by lacking actual-internal reasons to be moral. And, since

one can escape having actual-internal reasons to be moral simply by lacking actual-internal,

evaluative states in favor of being moral, then one could escape having normative reasons to be

moral simply by lacking actual-internal states in favor of being moral. Since normative reasons

to be moral are necessary for moral obligation and blameworthiness, then one could escape

moral obligation and blame just by lacking actual-internal, evaluative states in favor of being

moral. And such a lack seems possible. Thus, without categorical reasons to be moral, a weak

relativism follows: some are morally obligated and blameworthy and others are (at least

possibly) not just because of a disparity in their actual-internal evaluative states. Further, a

stronger relativism might also follow, since if different actual-internal states can *form* or

constitute reasons and obligations, then perhaps others, due to their differing actual-internal

evaluative states, are obligated to do things contrary to what we are obligated to do, etc.

Yet, the concept of normative, non-instrumental reasons (NNIRs) describes the sort of

thing that supports or demands the serial killer's obligation to refrain from killing, even though he

might have every inclination to do otherwise. That is, it must cohere with our concept of NNIRs

to suppose that a moral wanton--one who lacks actual-internal evaluative states in favor of

being moral--has these reasons.

But if the only reasons which NNIRs could be were actual internal reasons, then an

agent would not have such reasons if they lacked the proper actual internal evaluative states

(i.e. if one was a moral wanton). And thus, if it would cohere with our concept to say that there

are only actual internal reasons, then it would also cohere with our concept to say that there are

no NNIRs which the wanton can have in spite of his desires--for one who lacks desires for or

has desires contrary to being moral lacks these actual internal, non-instrumental reasons. But

that does not cohere with our concept, since our concept clearly pushes us to believe that there

are at least some normative non-instrumental reasons which the wanton possesses in spite of

his desires.

The conclusion of this sort of argument tells us something modest: at least some NNIRs, namely those which support a very important subset of moral beliefs--those beliefs we feel must be backed by reasons which are not escapable just by being a moral wanton--must be categorical (either external or counterfactual-internal). Yet this does not require that all NNIRs must be categorical, allowing for the possibility that there are some actual-internal, normative, non-instrumental reasons.

This argument might seem insignificant at first blush, then. For how can it show that we are conceptually committed to at least the categorical nature of all NNIRs?

Note that the foundational or ultimate set of ends, principles and beliefs which the angsty worry there are no good foundational or ultimate reasons to pursue are just the sort of moral beliefs they feel must be either inescapable or highly difficult to escape. And thus the moral reasons supporting these foundational moral beliefs seem to be of the sort that their normativity or existence cannot depend on the actual-internal states of agents who we suppose have them. For instance, one's ultimate, moral foundation might include beliefs like the following: *one ought to value oneself and others as intrinsically valuable, one ought to value the life of sentient creatures as intrinsically valuable, one ought to seek the flourishing of sentient creatures as an end itself.* The normative, non-instrumental reasons which support these moral beliefs or principles do not seem to be compatible with supposing that one could dodge this reason by lacking the proper actual-internal states. So, under the angsty conceptual scheme, at least the final or ultimate reasons (FNNIRs)--the normative, non-instrumental reasons which support our foundational moral beliefs--cannot be merely actual-internal, and so must be categorical (external or counterfactual-internal). This conclusion narrows down the playing field: if the argument below is sound, to support the weakest version CC5, the angsty only need to show that FNNIRs cannot be merely counterfactual-internal. The conclusion of this modified, Landauian argument will lend support to CC5, though we need a further step to bridge the gap to CC5 (which is the function of the arguments to come).

For our purposes, it is best to formalize this argument as follows (MC).

MC1.   If FNNIRs are not categorical reasons, then FNNIRs to Φ metaphysically depend on the fact that agents who have those FNNIRs have actual-internal evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing.

MC2.   If FNNIRs to Φ metaphysically depend on the fact that agents who have those FNNIRs have actual-internal evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing, then if an agent lacked actual-internal evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing, then, just because of this fact, that agent would not have any FNNIR to Φ.

MC3.   If an agent lacking actual-internal evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing implies that that agent would not have any FNNIR to Φ, then moral wantons, just by being moral wantons, escape having some FNNIRs.

MC4.   But moral wantons, just by being moral wantons, cannot escape having some FNNIRs.

MC5.   FNNIRs must be categorical reasons.

MC1 and MC2 appear to be definitionally true. For if our concept of an FNNIR is not of a kind of categorical reason, then, since it is a reason, it would be of an actual-internal reason, or of either an actual internal or categorical reason. SInce the concept of an actual internal reason is just of a reason to Φ which metaphysically depends on agents with those reasons having evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing, it follows that, since at least some FNNIRs are actual internal reasons, then they would metaphysically depend as well (MC1). Now, if x metaphysically (causally, explanatorily) depends on y, then, without y, x fails to exist/obtain. So, if some FNNIRs depended on actual-internal evaluative states, then, without them, those FNNIRs would fail to exist/obtain (MC2). And, if it is coherent to say that "if those actual internal evaluative states do not obtain (for an agent), then it would be coherent to say that those FNNIRs do not obtain (for that agent)," then it is also clearly coherent to say that "FNNIRs would not exist for moral wantons," since moral wantons are, by definition, those for whom actual internal evaluative states (in favor of being moral) do not obtain (MC3). And, given the considerations above regarding the nature of FFNIRs, MC4 seems to be intuitively plausible. Thus, FNNIRs must be *categorical* (under our current concept of FNNIRs).

Before moving on, I must preempt an attack which might be made on (MC2) by Humeans (those who attempt to ground morality and its normativity in the actual-desires or moral sentiments of rational agents like us). MC2 states that the coherence of one claim-- "FNNIRs to Φ metaphysically depend on agents with those reasons having actual internal states in favor of Φ-ing"--implies the coherence of a further claim: "if an agent lacks internal states in favor of Φ-ing, then that agent lacks FNNIRs to Φ." The Humean might object to (MC2) by claiming that, even if that first claim is coherent, it does not follow that the second claim is coherent. For, surely, in their view, the second claim describes something metaphysically impossible--all rational agents will have actual-internal evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing, where Φ-ing is any act which is demanded by a foundational moral principle. The Humean is asserting that it is *impossible* for a rational agent like us to lack the actual-internal states in favor of being moral.

These considerations raised by the Humean, however, are irrelevant to MC2. Notice that (MC2) does *not* claim that the coherence of metaphysical dependence of FNNIRs implies the metaphysical *possibility* any agent lacking FNNIRs. Rather, all (MC2) claims is that, if it was coherent to think that foundational, normative, non-instrumental reasons to Φ depended on actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing, then it would be *logically possible* (coherent) for an agent to escape normative reasons to Φ *just because* they lack actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing. Such a thing would seem to be coherent if it was coherent to suppose foundational, normative, non-instrumental reasons consist in or depend on merely actual-internal reasons, regardless of its possibility. Considerations of metaphysical impossibility do not seem to touch (MC2), then,, since all MC wishes to establish is that there is a conflict between one perhaps purely theoretical supposition and our concept of normativity. Further, to even get this sort of objection off the ground, the Humean has to suppose that it is impossible for agents like us to lack or have overall immoral actual-internal states. This is a major metaphysical assumption. This sort of objection to MC2, then, doesn't seem to succeed.

(II.3.1) Arguments from Intrinsic Reasons and Intrinsic Properties (IR and IR*)

With MC out of the way, I move to the second set of arguments in favor of externalizing

normative, non-instrumental reasons (CC5). These arguments identity normative, non-

instrumental reasons (NNIRs) with intrinsic reasons (IRs). Intrinsic reasons are reasons to Φ for

Φ-ing's sake, or for the sake of whatever Φ-ing is a response to. The crux of these arguments is

that IRs, and so NNIRs, cannot be dependent on the internal states of agents (IR3/IR*4). I

defend the claim that IRs cannot so depend by drawing out a series of intuitions regarding IRs.

These intuitions increase the plausibility of IR3/IR*4, but I do not pretend that they are fully

convincing for all.

IR1.   NNIRs are IRs.
IR2.   If NNIRs were actual-internal reasons, then x having an NNIR to Φ would
metaphysically depend on x having actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing.
IR3.   But, for any IR to Φ which x has, x having that IR to Φ does *not* metaphysically
depend on x having actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing.

IR4.   NNIRs are not actual-internal reasons.

IR*1.   NNIRs are IRs.
IR*2.   If NNIRs were counterfactual-internal reasons, then x having an NNIR to Φ would
metaphysically depend on x having counterfactual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing.
IR*3.   x having an NNIR to Φ metaphysically depends on x having counterfactual-
internal states to Φ iff x having an NNIR to Φ metaphysically depends on those features
of x which dispose x to have actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing under ideal
conditions.
IR*4.   But, for any IR to Φ which x has, x having that IR to Φ does not metaphysically
depend on those features of x which dispose x to have internal states in favor of Φ-ing
under ideal conditions.

*IR*5.   NNIRs are not counterfactual-internal reasons.*

I start with the easiest premises to defend: IR2/IR*2. IR2 and IR*2 state what seem to be

definitional truths. Per our taxonomy of reasons, an actual-internal reason is a reason

dependent on the actual-internal evaluative states of agents like us. To have such a reason, an

agent must have actual-internal states in favor of acting in accordance with that reason. Counterfactual-internal reasons, likewise, depend on the counterfactual-internal states of agents with those reasons.

IR*3 is necessary to make sense of IR*2. For while dependence on actual-internal states makes clear sense, dependence on counterfactual-internal states is much less clear. On what I call actual-internalist accounts, the actual-internal states of agents are something like psychological preferences. So, the metaphysical dependence relation is between a reason and some thing which actually exists (an internal state or set of internal states). Dependence on counterfactual-internal states, though, is not dependence on the psychological preferences which agents actually have. For an agent having a counterfactual-internal state in favor of Φ-ing does not mean that that agent *actually has* any internal states or sets of internal states in favor of Φ-ing. What an agent having counterfactual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing amounts to is for that agent to be disposed to form actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing *under certain conditions.* An agent can *actually* lack internal states in favor of Φ-ing or actually favor the contrary of Φ-ing, and yet it still be true that that agent would, under certain conditions, actually favor Φ-ing. Logically counterfactual-internal reasons are reasons which logically depend on the truth of a proposition about what an agent is disposed to favor. Metaphysically counterfactual-internal reasons metaphysically depend on the *fact* or *state of affairs* which the proposition about the agent's dispositions describe. The best way to cash this dependence out, it seems to me, is that counterfactual-internal reasons are reasons which depend on the actual features of an agent which dispose that agent to favor Φ-ing under some ideal conditions. Under this way of understanding counterfactual-internal dependence, reasons metaphysically depend on the actual properties or features of agents, just not their actual-internal *evaluative* states. This seems to best capture the theory of Kantian's like Korsgaard. For Korsgaard posits that reasons

(and normativity) depend on the rationality of agents.[42] For an agent to have a reason to Φ, that agent must be disposed to favor Φ-ing; but this fact obtains only because that agent is rational (has rational faculties). For Korsgaard, reasons just are (are metaphysically constituted by) the recommendations of an agent's reason,[43] and thus she seems to understand metaphysical dependence as metaphysical constitution. So, the reasons of agents to Φ depend on the rational properties agents actually have, just not their actually favoring Φ-ing. IR*3 seems to be a reasonable way to make sense of IR*2.

IR1/IR*1 state that normative, non-instrumental reasons are intrinsic reasons, and I find this conceptual link highly plausible. An NNIR is a reason to Φ regardless of the utility (broadly construed as conduciveness toward some other end) of Φ-ing. It seems natural to describe reasons to Φ regardless of the utility of Φ-ing as reasons to Φ for Φ-ing's own sake, or for the sake of that which Φ-ing is a response to. Reasons to appreciate a beautiful work of art without regard to the usefulness of that aesthetic appreciation seem to be reasons to respond for the sake of the artwork itself (that which Φ-ing is a response to), or perhaps for the sake of the aesthetic experience itself (Φ-ing itself).

(II.3.2) Defense of Premise IR3

Of course, the final premises, IR3 and IR*4, are the hardest to defend. First, a defense of IR3: how can we hope to show that our concept of IRs to Φ does not cohere with the supposition that they (IRs) depend on actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing? I think such a thing can be done by pointing to the strangeness of propositions of the forms below:

> P1. *X has an IR to Φ, but X would not if they did not actually have (actual-internal) evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing.*

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[42] "Your willing the end in a sense makes it good" (Korsgaard, The Normativity of Instrumental Reason," 227.) "To be motivated 'by reason' is normally to be motivated by one's reflective endorsement of incentives and impulses, including affections, which arise in a natural way" (Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity,* 127.). "'Reason'" means reflective success" (Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity,* 97.).
[43] One has a reason to act when rationality finds it "rationally necessary" to do so. (Korsgaard. "The Normativity of Instrumental Reason," 223.)

P2. *X has an IR to Φ, and X having this reason metaphysically depends on X actually having internal, evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing.*

Considering only these abstract, propositional forms, in which Φ-ing does not stand for any particular subject, and where the nature of intrinsic reasons is not spelled out fully, the strangeness of asserting claims with these forms is not evident. But when Φ-ing is made particular and the notion of an intrinsic reasons is spelled out more, asserting such things is strange in a great number of cases (especially when the claims are about IRs which are *foundational* to our moral systems--call these FIRs from here). Consider the following:

P1*. *X has a normal reason to Φ, either for Φ-ing's own sake, or for the sake of whatever Φ-ing is a response to, but x would not if they did not actually have (actual-internal) evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing.*

P1**. *I have a normative reason to value Samantha as an end in herself, either for the sake of valuing Samantha itself, or for the sake of Samantha herself, but I would not have such a reason if I did not actually have (actual-internal) evaluative states in favor of valuing Samantha as an end in herself, or in favor of Samantha herself.*

P1***. *I have a normative reason to appreciate Vermeer's 'Girl with the Pearl Earring,' either for the sake of appreciating the painting itself, or for the sake of the painting itself, but I would not have such a reason if I did not actually have (actual-internal) evaluative states in favor of appreciating the painting, or in favor of the painting itself.*

P1* is just the propositional-form P1 spelled out more fully, while P1** and P1*** are two instances of this form. Consider the same sorts of steps regarding P2.

P2*. *X has a normative reason to Φ, either for Φ-ing's own sake, or for the sake of whatever Φ-ing is a response to, and X having this reason metaphysically depends on X actually having internal, evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing.*

P2**. *I have a normative reason to value Samantha as an end in herself, either for the sake of valuing Samantha itself, or for the sake of Samantha herself, but my reason metaphysically depends on my actually having internal, evaluative states in favor of valuing Samantha itself, or of Samantha herself.*

P2***. *I have a normative reason to appreciate Vermeer's 'Girl with the Pearl Earring,' either for the sake of appreciating the painting itself, or for the sake of the painting itself, but my reason metaphysically depends on my actually having internal, evaluative states in favor of appreciating the painting itself, or of the painting itself.*

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In each of these cases, the meaning of propositions of the form P1 and P2 are spelled out more clearly and instances of these forms are given.

The more we unpack and understand the concepts at play in claims about our intrinsic reasons, the more claims with the form of P1 and P2 seem strange. Do we ordinarily take it that our reasons to value others or to respond to beautiful works of art for their own sake *really* would vanish if our actual psychology differed (P1-P1***)? And do we ordinarily take it that these sorts of reasons are somehow grounded in, constituted in, or substantially explained by our actual-internal evaluative states (P2-P2***)? Now, if one perceives that there is some sort of internal tension in asserting propositions like these, I take it that this indicates something about one's concept of intrinsic reasons. The strangeness of these propositions is, in my view, an indicator of internal tension between our concept of intrinsic reasons and actual-internal reasons. Intrinsic reasons, it seems, are ordinarily the sorts of things which we do not feel depend so strongly *on our actual preferences or psychologies.*

But can any more be said in favor of this intuition of tension or incoherence? Are there any considerations which might bolster our confidence that IRs do not depend (either logically or metaphysically) on our actual-internal states?

I think more can be said in favor of the internal tension/strangeness of P1 and P2. In concrete cases, when we suppose that we have intrinsic reasons to value one another or some object external to us, we most naturally describe this reason as rooted in or depending on the nature or properties of the subject which we have reason to value. I take it that the strangeness of P1 and P2 stem from an intuition expressible in something like,

> (ia) *Our having reasons to Φ for the sake of Φ-ing or for the sake of that which Φ-ing is a response to emerge from, are constituted by, or are explained by the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing itself, or that which Φ-ing is a response.*

(ia) expresses the intuition that intrinsic reasons are, in some very significant sense, metaphysically dependent on the intrinsic properties of entities which we have reason to respond to or pursue. But this would suggest a strong metaphysical dependence on entities and

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properties of entities external to agents with IRs. For both the relevant properties of Samantha and Vermeer's painting are external to the agent with an IR to value or respond to them in certain ways.

Derek Parfit has given an intuition pump, which I have modified slightly, meant to draw out the plausibility of intuitions like (ia).[44] Consider a person who prefers agony tomorrow to slight pain today. What explains or provides her with a reason to *prefer* slight pain today? Assume also that agony and slight pain are equally conducive to all her other ends/desires/goals. Either choice will result in the same overall quality of life, other than the quality added or subtracted by the experience of agony or slight pain. So, this person has no *instrumental* reasons to prefer one over the other. That is, the only reasons which she might have to prefer slight pain to agony are *non-instrumental or intrinsic reasons.* But what provides her with or explains these reasons? Consider a few candidates for what might explain her reasons to prefer slight pain over agony:

> (a) She really does prefer slight pain today, she is just not aware of her preference (her actual-internal states explain her reason)
> (b) She would, under some non-actual conditions, prefer slight pain today to agony tomorrow. (her counterfactual-internal states explain her reason)
> (c) Agony tomorrow is worse than slight pain today. (properties of external entities explain her reason)

We can quite easily construct the thought experiment to rule out (a) as an explanation, while (b) raises a pesky question: why prefer tomorrow's preferences, or preferences made under ideal conditions, to today's? (c) seems to be the most natural. But then we seem to intuitively explain IRs such as this as stemming from or depending on objects external to us, or from the moral properties of objects external to us (ia).

This intuition that IRs depend on external entities/factors (ia) prompts another sort of intuition, expressed as below:

> (ib) *Our having reasons to Φ for the sake of Φ-ing or for the sake of that which Φ-ing is a response to would not vanish even if our actual-internal states were to change so that*

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[44] Parfit, Derek. "Rationality and Reasons."

we would not favor Φ-ing, so long as the nature of Φ-ing or that which Φ-ing is a response to remained the same.

The link between (ia) and (ib) is not very clear, however. For (ia) does not seem to imply (ib), since it seems coherent to suppose that a reason may depend (logically or metaphysically) on both internal and external entities/factors, so that, just because reasons depend on external factors, this does not rule out the possibility that, without certain internal factors, we would not have such reasons.

Reflection on (ia), however, does seem to suggest (ib). We might argue as follows: if intrinsic reasons to Φ depend or stem from the nature and properties of external entities, then why should changes or depravities in our internal states be capable of overriding those external factors which contribute to those reasons? That is, one might judge that, because the properties of external entities are felt to contribute to our having reasons, they must be valuable or important, and this value or importance must be a reason-giving importance. If one supposes the contrary to (ib) (that an *actual* lack of internal states in favor of Φ-ing would imply a lack of IRs to Φ, even if the nature of Φ-ing or that which Φ-ing is a response to did not change), then one seems to suppose that the actual-internal states of agents like us can override the importance of external entities and their natures/properties. Supposing such a thing seems to commit one to recognizing actual-internal states as much more important or relevant to intrinsic reasons (i.e. more normatively weighty; see Chapter III for an analysis of "normative weight") than the intrinsic properties of external entities. For the beauty of an artwork (one of its intrinsic properties) would be insufficient to give rise to reasons to value that artwork, and just by an agent actually lacking some internal states in favor of valuing an artwork, the beauty of that artwork becomes totally impotent for providing reasons. If this was true, actual-internal states must, in some sense, have much more weight, importance or relevance than external entities/states/factors. But this seems to be an unpalatable conclusion, so the angsty come to deny it, thereby asserting (ib).

After coming to assert (ib), the angsty will thus be drawn to confidently assert (ic):

(ic) *Our having IRs to Φ does not depend (logically or metaphysically) on our actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing.*

For if (ic) is false (if our IRs to Φ logically or metaphysically depended on our actual-internal states), then (ib) must also be false (the absence of those states in favor of Φ-ing, or presence of states in favor of ~Φ-ing, would prevent us from having our IRs to Φ, even if none of the properties of Φ-ing or that which Φ-ing is a response to changed). Logical or metaphysical dependence of IRs on actual-internal states of agents like us would imply a denial of (ib). And since we have already come to find (ib) plausible, we are then drawn to affirm (ic).

I describe the move from (ia) to (ib) and (ic) as a move from a recognition of metaphysical dependence on external states/entities to a recognition of metaphysical independence from internal states/entities. An example of this intuitive progression might be as follows. First, I find it intuitive to suggest that the intrinsic properties of a painting are responsible, in some deep way, for my having an intrinsic reason to appreciate that painting (ia). This leads me to think that, unless those intrinsic properties of the painting (ie beauty) changed, my preferences would not be so relevant to my reasons or important in themselves as to strip me of my reason to appreciate the painting (ib). Likewise, I am drawn to think that (ib) holds for others as well, and I might express this by saying that "even those with horrendously bad taste have reason to enjoy this painting." But since a change or depravity in my actual-internal states or those of others does not imply or suggest a change in my IRs to value that painting, then my IRs to value that painting neither logically nor metaphysically depend on those internal states (ic), which is equivalent to (IR*4).

In sum, I take it that, if one finds metaphysical dependence of IRs on external entities plausible (ia), then one will probably also feel the pull of intuitions which state or imply that IRs are metaphysically independent from actual internal states (ib, ic). One way which I suggested

for explaining why (ia) might prompt such anti-internalist intuitions is to posit that something like

the following argument underlies the move from (ia) to (ib) and (ic).

SR1.1.   If, for some IRs to Φ which x has, x having that IR to Φ metaphysically depends on x having actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing, then x lacking those internal states would strip x of that IR to Φ.

SR1.2.   If x lacking actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing would strip x of an IR to Φ, then the normative weight of x's actual-internal states would trump the normative weight of the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing, or that which Φ-ing is a response to.

SR1.3.   But for any IR to Φ which x has, the normative weight of x's actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing *does not* trump the normative weight of the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing, nor that which Φ-ing is a response to.

SR1.4.   For any IR to Φ which x has, x having that IR to Φ does not metaphysically depend upon x having actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing. (IR3)

Under this formalization, (ia) and reflection on the normative weight of our internal states seems

to lead one to find SR1.3 plausible.

The link between (ia) and (ib) and (ic) might also be explained by arguments from the

sufficiency of external entities for intrinsic reasons, similar to the argument below.

SR2.1.   For any IR to Φ which x might have, the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing (or of that which Φ-ing is a response to) are sufficient for x having that IR to Φ.

SR2.2.   If, for any IR to Φ which x might have, the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing (or of that which Φ-ing is a response to) are sufficient for x having that IR to Φ, then x having an IR to Φ does not metaphysically depend on x having actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing, *unless* those intrinsic properties of Φ-ing (or of that which Φ-ing is a response to) metaphysically depend on x having actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing.

SR2.3.   For any IR to Φ which x might have, the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing (or of that which Φ-ing is a response to) which are sufficient for x having an IR to Φ *do not* metaphysically depend on x having actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing.

SR2.4.   For any IR to Φ which x might have, x having an IR to Φ does not metaphysically depend on x having actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing. (IR3)

Under this interpretation of the angsty intuitive progression, (ia) serves to raise the plausibility of

SR2.1. Parfit's intuition pump might not just leave us with (ia)--the intuition that the properties of

external entities are important, necessary factors for the explanation of our having IRs--but that

the nature of external entities are, in many cases at least, sufficient for our having IRs. The plausibility of SR2.3 likely will come from the angsty being unable to see why they ought to think that the relevant properties or natures of external entities need be metaphysically dependent on actual-internal states.

Further, though these arguments might explain why one moves from (ia) to (ib) and (ic/IR*4), one may also find (ib), and hence (ic/IR*4), intuitively plausible in its own right. For when one is attempting to analyze out concepts already in their own possession, one may simply find themselves aware of the contents of their concepts. This seems especially plausible when one is attempting to draw out the meanings of their *fundamental* concepts. Arguing about the meanings or contents of our fundamental concepts often leaves us perplexed, for, when a concept is truly fundamental, there are no other concepts which we can define our concept in terms of. Our concepts of NNIRs and IRs may be fundamental in this way. In these cases, nothing more might be done to prove the meaning of these concepts than to reflect, as deeply and often as one can, on their use, and whether or not one is drawn to certain analyses of them. But if arguments about the meaning of NNIRs and IRs are arguments about fundamental concepts, then we should not be surprised when we evaluate these arguments by simply finding, after reflection, what meanings we take to be plausible.

(II.3.3) Defense of Premise IR*4

My defense of IR*4 is virtually identical to that of IV3, and so little needs to be said by way of introduction. Consider the following two propositional forms, parallel to P1/P2.

> P3. *X has an IR to Φ, but X would not if they did not, under some ideal conditions, have evaluative states in favor of Φ-ing.*

> P4. *X has an IR to Φ, and X having this reason metaphysically depends on x having certain features which dispose x, under some ideal circumstances, to favor Φ-ing.*

Now, P3, unlike P1, does not in fact seem strange to assert. For P1 and P3 claim *logical* dependence of IRs on internal states. That is, P1 and P3 claim that a lack of internal states in

favor of Φ-ing implies a lack of IRs to Φ, but seem neutral regarding metaphysical dependence. But, as mentioned in Chapter (I.2.3), one could choose a set of conditions such that statements with the form of P3 would not be strange or seem to involve any internal tension. For instance, "I have an intrinsic reason to love my neighbor *only if* I would, upon finding myself under conditions which force me to favor anything which I have reason to favor, actually favor loving my neighbor." Though this example is trivial, P3 is not very strange, unlike P1. P1 is strange because the supposition that IRs *logically* depend on actual-internal states has some strange or unpalatable implications. But the logical dependence of IRs on counterfactual-internal states does not seem to have such strange or unpalatable consequences.

Claims like P4, however, might still be judged to be strange (as claims like P2 are), since they claim that IRs to Φ *metaphysically* depend on the counterfactual-internal states of agents. Since metaphysical dependence on the counterfactual-internal states of agents seems best described as a metaphysical dependence on those features of agents which dispose them to form actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing under ideal conditions, I have omitted talk of counterfactual-internal states from P4 (see my defense of IR*3 in Chapter II.3.1). Consider the following:

> P4*. *X has a normative reason to Φ, either for Φ-ing's own sake, or for the sake of whatever Φ-ing is a response to, and X having this reason metaphysically depends on x having certain features which dispose x, under some ideal circumstances, to favor Φ-ing.*

> P4**. *I have a normative reason to value Samantha as an end in herself, either for the sake of valuing Samantha itself, or for the sake of Samantha herself, but my reason metaphysically depends on my having certain features which dispose me, under some ideal circumstances, to favor valuing Samantha as an end in herself.*

> P4***. *I have a normative reason to appreciate Vermeer's 'Girl with the Pearl Earring,' either for the sake of appreciating the painting itself, or for the sake of the painting itself, but my having this reason metaphysically depends on my having certain features which dispose me, under some ideal circumstances, to favor appreciating the painting.*

A feeling that claims like P4** and P4*** are strange can be prompted by considering, again, intuition (ia), and how it might suggest to us (id) and (ie):

(ia) *Our having reasons to Φ for the sake of Φ-ing or for the sake of that which Φ-ing is a response to emerge from, are constituted by, or are explained by the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing itself, or that which Φ-ing is a response.*

(id) *Our having reasons to Φ for the sake of Φ-ing or for the sake of that which Φ-ing is a response to would not vanish even if we did not have any features which disposed us to, under ideal conditions, form internal states in favor of Φ-ing.*

(ie) *Our having IRs to Φ does not depend on our having any features which dispose us to, under ideal conditions, form internal states in favor of Φ-ing.*

This progression from (ia) to (id) and (ie), just as that from (ia) to (ib) and (ic), might be explained by making the following sort of supporting argument (SR3):

SR3.1.   If, for some IRs to Φ which x has, x having that IR to Φ metaphysically depends on those features of x which dispose x to have actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing under ideal conditions, then x lacking those features would strip x of that IR to Φ.
SR3.2.   If x lacking those features would strip x of their IR to Φ, then the normative weight of those features of x would trump the normative weight of the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing, or that which Φ-ing is a response to.
SR3.3.   But for any IR to Φ which x has, the normative weight of those features of x (which dispose x, under ideal conditions, to favor Φ-ing) *do not* trump the normative weight of the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing, nor that which Φ-ing is a response to.

SR3.4.   *For any IR to Φ which x has, x having that IR to Φ does not metaphysically depend upon those features of x (which dispose x, under ideal conditions, to favor Φ-ing).* (IR*4)

The plausibility of premise SR*3 will stem from the same sort of intuitions mentioned above, in defense of SR3, namely, intuition (ia) and the results of reflection on the relevance, normative weight or importance of our dispositions (counterfactual-internal states). The main idea behind SR*3 is that the properties or natures of entities external to us are important or weighty enough, at least relative to our dispositions, so that the importance or weight of our internal dispositions is not great enough to strip us of or change our IRs to Φ.

Additionally, an argument from sufficiency like the one below might also explain the intuitive progression from (ia) to (id) and (ie).

SR4.1.   For any IR to Φ which x might have, the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing (or of that which Φ-ing is a response to) are sufficient for x having that IR to Φ.

SR4.2.   If, for any IR to Φ which x might have, the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing (or of that which Φ-ing is a response to) are sufficient for x having that IR to Φ, then x having an IR to Φ does not metaphysically depend on x having features which dispose x, under ideal conditions, to form states in favor of Φ-ing, *unless* those intrinsic properties of Φ-ing (or of that which Φ-ing is a response to) metaphysically depend on x having those features.

SR4.3.   For any IR to Φ which x might have, the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing (or of that which Φ-ing is a response to) which are sufficient for x having an IR to Φ *do not* metaphysically depend on x having features which dispose x, under ideal conditions, to form states in favor of Φ-ing.

SR4.4.   For any IR to Φ which x might have, x having an IR to Φ does not metaphysically depend on x having features which dispose x, under ideal conditions, to form states in favor of Φ-ing. (IR*4)

Of course, one predisposed to angst might find (id) plausible in itself, and thereby find (ie) and

(IR*4) plausible. Given that the defense of these arguments (SR3 and SR4) will be virtually

identical to those above (SR1 and SR2), I leave the discussion of these arguments here for the

sake of space.

(II.4) Summary of the Arguments for CC5

I take it that the arguments covered here (MC, IR and IR*) are accurate representations of why

one might come to insist on the externality of normative, non-instrumental reasons, or at least

the externality of those reasons which support our ultimate moral foundations (CC5). MC

appealed to the felt inescapability of FNNIRs to show that they must be categorical, narrowing

the nature of FNNIRs down to either external or counterfactual-internal reasons. IR and IR*

attempted, via reflection on the meaning of our concepts of intrinsic reasons (IRs), to draw out

the meaning of normative, non-instrumental reasons, and concluded that this meaning very

plausibly describes reasons which do not depend on agents with those reasons having internal

states in favor of Φ-ing. I doubt, however, that these arguments can convince all my readers,

since I also doubt that the angsty conception of "normativity" or "normative reasons" is universal.

Still, these arguments, I suspect, will be enough to convince those who, unknowingly, share this

same conception of normativity and normative, non-instrumental reasons. And, perhaps, it will reveal to the angsty *why* they are angsty, and to the non-angsty, why their friends, poisoned by philosophy, are suffering.

One final note: the angsty might strengthen arguments like IR and IR* by narrowing their scope. As discussed in Chapter (II.2) during my defense of argument (MC), angst can be produced by belief in a weaker version of CC5, which states that those non-instrumental reasons foundational to our moral systems (FNNIRs) must be external reasons (cannot be internal reasons). One might, then, narrow arguments IR and IR* by seeking only to argue that intrinsic reasons (IRs) of the sort which FFNIRs are cannot be internal (call these intrinsic reasons which are foundational to our moral system "FIRs"). And this seems highly plausible, as discussed in (MC). For the sorts of ultimate/foundational moral claims in question are claims about intrinsic values, or intrinsic reasons to value as intrinsically valuable, and, in these most sacred of claims, we intuitively feel that *we and our internal states* are not the grounds, sources of explanations of reasons, but that intrinsically valuable subjects are.

In the next Chapter, I seek to defend CC6*--the claim that normative, non-instrumental reasons depend on external sources of normativity. This defense will require a deeper analysis of the notion of "normative weight" invoked already in this Chapter.

CHAPTER III

WHY EXTERNALIZE THE SOURCES OF NORMATIVITY?

(III.1) The Angsty Arguments for CC6*

With a defence of CC5 out of the way, this Chapter will defend its parallel under the second set

of angsty conceptual commitments (CC6*), reproduced below:

> CC1*.　　True ascriptions of moral properties require that there are normative reasons to act in accord with those ascriptions.
> CC2*.　　The normativity of moral imperatives requires normative reasons to act in accord with those imperatives.
> CC3*.　　If there are any normative reasons at all, then there must be normative, non-instrumental reasons.
> CC4*.　　If a reason, a moral principle, or some other subject is normative, then there is a source of its normativity.
> CC5*.　　Sources of normativity are either internal or external.
> CC6*.　　Normative, non-instrumental reasons (at least those which support our ultimate moral ends, claims, beliefs) cannot have merely internal sources of normativity.

Notice that CC6* does not require the independence of normative, non-instrumental reasons

(NNIRs) from internal sources of normativity. Rather, CC6* only states that NNIRs depend for

their normativity on something *in addition to* the internal states of agents like us, namely,

external sources of normativity. The modesty of CC6* then makes it much easier to defend than

CC5. For CC5 claimed that NNIRs to Φ must be external, that is, that x having an NNIR to Φ

does not depend on x having internal states in favor of Φ-ing. CC5, in claiming metaphysical

independence, obviously claims something much stronger than CC6*.

(III.2) The Argument from the Explanatory Power of Intrinsic Properties (EP)

My reader might have noticed that the intuitions drawn out in support of arguments IR and IR*

border on endorsements of source externalism (the view that the sources of normativity, at least

for NNIRs or FNNIRs, must be external), not just of reasons externalism. In Chapter (II.3.2), I

drew attention to the plausibility of (ia), which suggested that the natures or properties of

external entities play a significant, indispensable role in the explanations of our having IRs

(intrinsic reasons--reasons to Φ for the sake of Φ-ing, or for the sake of that which Φ-ing is a

response to). Overall, the plausibility of this intuition increases the plausibility of the claim that

our concept of IRs, and thereby NNIRs, are of *object-given* reasons:[45] reasons which stem from

and metaphysically depend on the nature of external objects/entities.

(ia) is compelling, I take it, because we, in a great many instances, are disposed to feel

that our intrinsic reasons (IRs), especially our foundational/ultimate, intrinsic reasons (FIRs),

stem from the intrinsic value of acting or from acting in response to something of intrinsic value.

A similar intuition also seems highly plausible:

(if) *The normative force of our IRs to Φ metaphysically depends on the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing, or on that which Φ-ing is a response to.*

(if) claims that the normative force (defined earlier as the compelling, obligating or justifying

force) of intrinsic reasons metaphysically depends on the objects of our reasons. For example,

the normative force of our reasons to cherish another person for their own sake metaphysically

depends on (stems from, emerges from, is constituted by, is grounded in) the properties of that

person, namely, those properties which we might say constitute or give rise to that person's

"intrinsic value."[46] The *obligating* power of our reasons to seek another's good for its own sake

stems from their own goodness (or their properties which constitute their goodness). Our

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[45] Again, I borrow the phrase "object given reasons" and much of the following arguments from (Parfit, Derek. "Rationality and Reasons.").

[46] I wish, however, to avoid arguments about intrinsic value, and talk only of the reason-giving or reason-relevant properties intrinsic to external entities.

reasons to appreciate a work of art are able to *justify* our love for that work precisely because these reasons stem from the aesthetic properties of that artwork.

If (if) is plausible (and it seems to be plausible, especially given (ia)), then the *compelling, justifying and obligating force* of intrinsic reasons metaphysically depend on entities and their intrinsic properties which are external (relative to that agent). Since NNIRs are IRs, the normative force of NNIRs depend on external entities and their intrinsic properties. And because sources of normativity were defined in Chapter (I.2.4) as that which explains why/how reasons have their normative force, or as that which metaphysically grounds the normative force of reasons, it seems (if) implies that that the normative force of IRs metaphysically depends on external sources of normativity. One might formalize this sort of argument as follows.

EP1.　　NNIRs are IRs to Φ (reasons to Φ for the sake of Φ-ing or for that which Φ-ing is a response to).

EP2.　　The normative force of IRs to Φ *on an agent* is metaphysically dependent on the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing or of that which Φ-ing is a response to.

EP3.　　If the normative force of IRs to Φ *on an agent* is metaphysically dependent on the intrinsic properties of Φ-ing or of that which Φ-ing is a response to, then the normative force of IRs *on an agent* is metaphysically dependent on external sources of normativity.

EP4.　　*The normative force of NNIRs on an agent is metaphysically dependent on external sources of normativity.*

EP1 seems true, so long as NNIRs are kinds of IRs. EP2 is warranted by our strong dispositions to cite the nature or intrinsic properties of external entities as the primary explanation of the forcefulness of intrinsic reasons. That is, by the plausibility of (ia) and (if). EP3 seems to be true given our definition of "sources of normativity" and "external sources of normativity."

To clarify, EP2, and the intuition (*if*), claim that the intrinsic properties of external entities metaphysically contribute to the normative force of intrinsic reasons, and that this contribution is metaphysically necessary for that normative force (to arise, to attach to reasons, to back reasons, to be a component of reasons).

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Again, a more modest version of EP might be given by narrowing the scope of our conclusion to regard only FIRs (foundational intrinsic reasons) and FNNIRs (foundational normative, non-instrumental reasons).

WEP1.   FNNIRs are FIRs (IRs to value or pursue our ultimate ends).
WEP2.   The normative force of FIRs *on us* is metaphysically dependent on the intrinsic properties of our ultimate ends.
WEP3.   If the normative force of FIRs *on us* is metaphysically dependent on the intrinsic properties of our ultimate ends, then the normative force of FIRs *on us* is metaphysically dependent on external sources of normativity.

WEP4.   The normative force of FNNIRs on us is metaphysically dependent on external sources of normativity.

The defense of the premises of this argument will be virtually identical to that of EP, so nothing more need be said on its account.

<center>(III.3) The Arguments from Normative Weight (NW and NW*)</center>

(III.3.1) Sources of Normativity, Normative Weight and Sufficient Sources of Normativity

But one may cast doubt on EP2 by asking whether or not the normative force of some intrinsic reasons, and so of some non-instrumental reasons, could be sufficiently explained by our internal states. Put another way, can the normative force of some intrinsic reasons arise from our internal states alone (assuming that all other conditions for "having an intrinsic reason" are met)? Even one example of a NNIR which depends only on internal states would show EP2 to be false, and, if we could find such an example, it may be easier than we previously supposed to console the angsty with internalist theories of normativity.

In this Chapter, I offer two non-deductive arguments for the view that internal states cannot serve as sufficient sources of normativity in themselves (NW and NW*). Since sources of normativity are either internal or external, then the success of my arguments indicates that, if there are normative, non-instrumental reasons, then they probably do depend upon external sources of normativity (assuming that normative, non-instrumental reasons require a sufficient source of normativity). The first argument, NW, argues for the insufficiency of actual-internal

states, while NW* argues for the insufficiency of counterfactual-internal states. Two assumptions plague these arguments. First, it is assumed in each that a sufficient source of normativity must carry in itself some significant measure of "normative weight." Second, it is assumed that we can reliably judge, after deep reflection on reasons and their potential sources of normativity, whether or not a potential source of normativity has sufficient normative weight to be capable of serving as a sufficient source of normativity on its own.

A brief note of introduction to the notion of normative weight is needed before delving into these arguments. Reflection on how we already think about normative reasons and their sources of normativity reveals enough about this concept to allow us to make use of it in argument.

Consider first that, for any reason to act which we have, we naturally suppose that the normativity or normative force of that reason is explained by *something or other.* It seems odd to suppose that we have normative reasons to act, but that there are no entities, facts or states which explain the normative force of this reason. I have a reason to respect my wife's autonomy, and it seems natural to say that *something or other* about my wife or her autonomy explains why this reason compels or obligates me. I have a reason to help those in pain, and it seems unnatural to suppose that no features of pain, of those in pain, of the world, or even of my self explain why this reason obligates me. Since anything which explains, grounds or gives rise to the normative force of a reason is a source of that reason's normativity, it seems we are disposed to think that:

(ig) *Normative reasons to act must have sufficient sources of normativity.*

Consider next a situation in which we must either Φ or Ψ, but that these actions are contraries. Imagine that Φ-ing would lead to slight pleasure, and Ψ-ing the prevention of horrendous pain. Imagine also that the world would remain exactly the same regardless of the action one

chooses to perform, besides, of course, that one would have a moment of slight pleasure followed by horrendous pain upon Φ-ing, and would not experience any pleasure, but would not experience any pain, upon Ψ-ing. Which do we have reason to do? And, even if we assume that we have, in some sense, both reason to Φ and to Ψ, we can still ask which of these reasons-- our reason to Φ or to Ψ--is more compelling. Which reason are we justified in choosing? Which reason are we obligated to act upon?

These seem to be questions about which of two reasons is *normative*, or about which reason is *more* normatively forceful. We might say that we have normative reason to Ψ, but not to Φ. Or, we might say that we have some normative reason to both Ψ and Φ, but that our reason to Ψ is more normatively forceful than our reason to Φ. In either case, I take it that we would ordinarily judge our reason to Ψ as the one which is normative, or more normatively forceful. Whichever judgement we make, I suspect that we make it precisely because we already assent to something like

(ih) *Horrible pain has more normative significance or weight than slight pleasure.*

We feel that something like (ih) explains why we have normative reason only to Ψ, or more normative reason to Ψ than Φ. And so, we feel that the normative weight of certain actions or the object of actions (that which actions would bring about) can explain which of two reasons is normative, or which of these two reasons is *more* normatively forceful than the other. But this means that the normative weight of the actions or objects of the actions involved in Ψ-ing explains why our reason to Ψ is normative, or why it has a certain degree of normativity (normative force). We might express this in an intuition (ii):

(ii) *The normative weight of an action or the object of an action explains the normativity or normative force of reasons to perform that action.*

Since sources of normativity are those things which explain, give rise to or ground the normativity of reasons, and since we are given to thinking of actions or their objects as

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explaining or grounding the normativity of reasons to perform those actions, then it seems that we are disposed to see actions or objects of actions as sources of normativity. With all this in mind, (ii) amounts to something like (ij) or (ij*):

> (ij) *The normative weight of the sources of normativity of a reason explains the normativity or normative force of that reason.*
>
> (ij*) Th*e normative force of any reason to Φ derives from the normative weight of that reason's sources of normativity.*

We are, then, given to seeing sources of normativity as having more or less normative weight, and that this measure of weight determines, contributes to or explains the normativity or measure of normative forcefulness of our reasons.

We are also given to judging that certain postulated sources of normativity do not explain or ground the normativity of reasons *because they do not have sufficient normative weight.* For instance, imagine two visually identical paintings--painting$_1$ and painting$_2$. If a snobbish critic were to argue that we have a normative reason to prefer painting$_1$ to painting$_2$ just because painting$_1$ was painted on a different but visually identical brand of canvas, we would probably consider this argument to be unconvincing. But why? I am tempted to say that we judge the choice of canvas to be totally irrelevant to our reasons to prefer one painting over another. I describe this irrelevance as a lack of normative weight or significance. Painting$_1$ using *this* brand of canvas does nothing to justify our preference for it; likewise, it does nothing to compel or obligate us to prefer painting$_1$. If we have any reason to prefer painting$_1$ over painting$_2$, the normativity of that reason is not at all explained by this feature of painting$_1$. Thus, we are given to seeing some potential sources of normativity as having no normative weight.

> (ik) *Some subjects posited as a reason's sources of normativity lack enough normative weight to be capable of contributing to, grounding or explaining the normativity of that reason.*

Clearly, though, we also judge that other potential sources of normativity *do* contribute to, ground or explain the normativity of some reason, and to varying degrees. Given all this, a final intuition seems plausible:

> (il) *A normative reason's source of normativity is sufficient only if that source has sufficient normative weight.*

Overall, the view I'm trying to draw out here is just the view that, for a reason to be normative, or for us to have a normative reason, that reason must have sufficient sources of normativity, and that this sufficiency requires that the source of normativity has a certain measure of normative weight which is sufficient.

Yet, even if one finds this way of thinking of normative reasons intuitive, what is meant by the "normative weight of a source of normativity" is unclear. Perhaps what I am referring to as "normative weight" is just a metaphor for our intuitive estimation/measure of the degree to which a source can make a reason normatively forceful, or of the degree to which a source can bring it about that we have some normative reason to act. On this account of normative weight, when we judge that a source is normatively weighty, what we are describing is that this entity, fact or consideration *is actually able* to contribute to the normative force of a reason, or bring it about that we a normative reason. Reflecting on what we have reason to do, we might "test" whether certain considerations--ie what an action might bring about, how an action relates to some subject, etc--are sufficient for our having a reason to act. We examine certain considerations, holding them before our mind, and attempt to measure whether or not they are sufficient to establish how we ought to act, or to guide our actions by providing or supporting normative reasons. Just as we might naively judge the value of a stone by estimating its weight and robustness as we pass it between our hands, we might also attempt to judge a consideration's reason-giving power or relevance to reasons by turning it over in our minds. We might conclude that a consideration has insufficient reason-giving power, and so cannot justify,

compel or obligate us, nor provide us with a reason to act which is so justifying, compelling or obligating. And, in concluding this, we might describe our estimation of a consideration as *an estimation of that consideration's normative weight.* The normative weight of some source of normativity, on this understanding, is thus a metaphor for that source's ability to justify, compel or obligate us, or to provide a reason which justifies, compels or obligates us. And, in requiring that normative reasons have sources which themselves possess sufficient normative weight, all we require is that normative reasons have sources which are sufficient to justify, compel or obligate us to act in certain ways, or which are sufficient for our having a reason which justifies, compels or obligates us to act in certain ways. What a consideration's power or ability to provide normative force to reasons consists in, however, is beyond me.

This metaphorical understanding[47] of normative weight might betray the reflective processes underlying our judgements about what we have reason to do: we take a source of normativity and reflect on it, turning it over in our minds, inspecting its ability to obligate or justify us, or provide us with obligating or justifying reasons, just as we might, when naively estimating the value of an object, turn it over in our hands, thereby "getting a feel" for its robustness. To judge whether or not a candidate can serve as a source of normativity, we place it before our minds, reflect on its nature and features deeply, and allow our mysterious moral faculties to produce a judgement of whether or not it can or should be taken as a guide to our actions or support for the force of our reasons.

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[47] There may be another way to understand "normative weight." We might suppose that normative weight is just another way of speaking of the value of an entity, state or actions postulated as a source of normativity. We might intuit that the intrinsic value of some entity, state or action contributes to or explains the normativity/normative force of a reason to act when that action relates in some way to that entity, state or action. Thus, normative weight is a metaphor for intrinsic value, and the intrinsic value of entities can make those entities sources of normativity of reasons. This seems to line up with the intuitions of moral realists like Eric Weilenberg. Weilenberg starts from the intuition that "intrinsic value is connected with normative reasons" in the way I described here: normative reasons are determined by the intrinsic value of things which the actions of reasons relate to (Weilenberg, Eric. *Robust Ethics,* 7-8). I have avoided talk of "intrinsic value" to avoid getting entangled in the debate over the nature of intrinsic value, and whether intrinsic value can be given an internalist analysis. For a defense of an internalist conception of intrinsic value, see: (Pasternack, Lawrence. "Intrinsic Value and Sentimentalism.").

This leads us to the second assumption of these arguments: if some source of normativity had sufficient normative weight (was able to provide for or ground a normative reason or the normative force of reason), then we would, upon deep reflection, probably recognize it as sufficiently weighty. On the metaphorical view of normative weight described above, our assumption becomes something like: if some considerations (entities, facts, states) were sufficient for our having a normative reason to Φ (or for a reason to have normative force), then we would likely judge, upon deep reflection, that those considerations are sufficient.

This is, in my reading, Korsgaard's method for establishing whether or not some subject can serve as a satisfactory source of normativity, and I accept it here (though not for the same reasons Korsgaard does). For Korsgaard, some consideration is sufficient to justify or warrant us in Φ-ing (i.e. is sufficient for the normative force) if, after reflecting on this consideration sincerely and reasonably, one finds that the consideration is sufficient to justify or compel them to behave morally.[48] That is, some consideration is a sufficient source of normativity if it survives reflection and is endorsed as sufficient by reflection (is endorsed by an agent after a process of deep and sincere reflection).[49] It seems to me that Korsgaard means this to be a metaphysical principle from which an epistemic principle might fall out. Normativity arises from "rational necessity," and, since we have some ability to determine what is rationally necessary via rational reflection, we can, to some significant degree, discover what considerations can give

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[48] "For this exercise to work, we have to eliminate these possibilities, and imagine that this other agent is sincere and reasonable, and does really want to know...the answer we need [to the normative question] is really the first person answer, the one that satisfies *us* when we *ourselves* ask the normative question" (Korsgaard, Christine. *The Sources of Normativity,* 17.)

[49] "The normative question is answered by showing that the points of view from which these different interests arise are congruent, that meeting the claims made from one point of view will not necessarily mean violating those that arise from another" (Korsgaard, 61). "...our ethical dispositions are judged good from every point of view which makes practical claims on us, including their own point of view" (Korsgaard, 78). That is, to establish the normativity of morality, one need only to reflect on some considerations and find them forceful (from one point of view), while also finding that they do not violate other important considerations (from other points of view).

rise to normativity. She titles this reflective process of testing sources of normativity the "reflective endorsement method."[50]

This strong implication seems to be supported by Korsgaard's view of normative reasons themselves: an agent having a normative reason to Φ *is just* for it to be true of the agent that, if they reflected rationally on Φ-ing, they would judge that they should Φ, would Φ , would desire to Φ , would think Φ-ing is good, etc.[51] For Korsgaard, having a reason to Φ is just for Φ-ing to be a thing which would be endorsed in judgement as a result of the process of reflective endorsement (survive the test of reflection). If "reasons to Φ " is shorthand for Φ -ing being something which would be endorsed under ideal, reflective conditions, then (presuming all reasons are normative reasons) the source of normativity for reasons to Φ seems to be actual or counterfactual reflective endorsement of Φ-ing itself. And since the process of reflective endorsement is the sort of thing reflective, rational agents presumably have epistemic access to, it seems rational agents (which, presumably, we are) would be able to predict or discover which sorts of actions are or would be endorsed by us after a process of reflection. Thus, it seems likely that deep, thorough reflection could reveal to us the sources of normativity, since its various counterfactual endorsements of actions are the sources of normativity of reasons to perform those actions, and we have access to the process which would produce those endorsements.

Anyone reading the previous Chapters of this essay will know that neither I nor the angsty will buy such an internalist reduction of reasons and their sources, at least not without good arguments. But, even though this internalist means of warranting our second assumption (which claims that our judgements of normative weight and/or of the sufficiency/insufficiency of

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[50] Korsgaard, 89.
[51] "...the reflective endorsement test is not merely a way of justifying morality. *It is morality itself*" (89). "'Reason' means reflective success" (Korsgaard, 97).

sources of normativity are, post deep, thorough reflection, justified) is not available to the angsty, the angsty can still rest assured that this assumption is not without grounds. While we cannot warrant this assumption on the grounds of a metaphysical reduction, we can instead appeal to the fact that *our concept of normativity is ours.* That is, our project in this essay is a complex process of conceptual analysis. Conceptual analysis is an attempt to draw out the meaning and contents of concepts *already in our possession.* As moral beings, as beings which guide themselves with reasons, and as beings which utilize the concept of normativity daily, we should expect to, to some extent, be able to, on some level, understand these concepts. Our concept of normativity includes in it, as discussed in Chapter (I.2.4), the notion of causes, explanations, or grounds of normativity--our concept of normativity includes the concept of *sources* of normativity. It is not, then, implausible to assume that we have some idea of what sorts of things can serve as sources of normativity. These sorts of assumptions permeate philosophy, so unless philosophy rests on a set of mistaken or unwarranted assumptions, then this assumption seems permissible. How can we suppose that we can discover the proper criteria of epistemic justification, if we are unwarranted in assuming that deep reflection on candidate criteria would produce justified judgements on which criteria are proper and which are improper? How can we suppose that we can tell the difference between proper and improper logical/inferential principles, if we are unwarranted in assuming that deep reflection on these principles would produce justified judgements regarding their status? How can we suppose that we are able to tell what has intrinsic value, without also assuming that our deep reflection on the nature of things will produce justified judgements of value?

As this discussion comes to a close, I must admit that I have no clue as to what the criteria of "sufficient normative weight" involves. Rather, I suggest than intuitive, deep and thorough reflection on candidates can suffice. Note also that the causes of absurd angst must be incredibly complex, since the drive to externalize--which is responsible for prompting angst--

relies on and is fueled by so many non-trivial intuitions and conceptual commitments not listed in our set of conceptual commitments. The human mind drives itself into states of suffering and anxiety for reasons unknown even to those who primarily identify as their minds.

(III.3.2) The First Argument from Normative Weight (NW)

(NW): First, let us assume that our concept of normative, non-instrumental reasons does not contain either counterfactual-internal or external sources of normativity as necessary conditions. If this was so, then our concept of normative reasons could be satisfied (sufficiently instantiated) by reasons which were backed only by actual-internal sources of normativity. If such a reason could satisfy our concept of NNIRs, then, we would expect to judge, after deep reflection, that the actual-internal states of agents like us are *alone* sufficient sources of normativity. We would expect to judge that these actual-internal states are sufficient sources of the normativity of reasons without positing any external entities or states as contributing to the normativity of these reasons. And so, the actual-internal states of agents like us would have to be *intrinsic* sources of normativity. This, however, is a difficult pill to swallow. For if actual-internal sources could be intrinsic sources of normativity, sufficient in themselves for providing normativity to non-instrumental reasons, then they would have to, without external or counterfactual-internal sources, have sufficient normative weight *in themselves* to obligate or justify us, even without counterfactual-internal or external sources of normativity. And if this were so, we would expect to judge, after deep reflection, that the actual-internal states of agents like us have very significant normative weight *in themselves,* regardless of the existence of external or counterfactual-internal sources of normativity.

But most of us do not, I think, believe such a thing, even after deep reflection. For there are many examples of agents valuing subjects or setting goals which are intuitively felt to be unreasonable or irrational. Our evaluative states are so often judged to be either amoral or

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immoral--to be irrelevant to or in violation of the force of normative reasons--that I cannot see any reason to suppose that our actual-internal evaluative states carry sufficient normative weight *in themselves.* A bland example might be the preferences of my mother: my mother preferring Φ does not necessarily confer good, powerful, compelling, justifying or obligating reasons to Φ, so why would the preferences of other agents, even when added together?

Two more extreme (and perhaps more convincing) examples make reference to human depravity. Imagine that a serial killer desires, favors or values very much the stabbing of young women. The killer recognizes that sharpening his knife would be conducive to realizing ends which he actually values. It seems right to say that, while the killer has actual-internal states which strongly favor sharpening his knife, he has no reason for doing so. We might even say, depending on our view of reasons, that our killer has a reason to sharpen his knife (a motivating or psychological reason), but not a normative reason. In either case it seems obvious to me that the killer does not have a *normative* reason to sharpen his knife in virtue of those actual-internal states strongly in favor of doing so. And this holds *even if* we assume that the killer has no actual-internal states which would favor him refraining from sharpening his knife, or from seeking to kill young women. So, actual-internal states in favor of Φ-ing are insufficient for normative reasons to Φ, or, put another way, they do not carry enough normative weight *in themselves* to provide the normativity which normative reasons require.

Additionally, borrowing Korsgaard's example and modifying it slightly, why should we care so deeply about the actual evaluative states of the species which produced the Nazi's?[52] The *sort of thing* actual-internal evaluative states are *are the same sorts of things* that motivated Nazi's to dehumanize and eliminate millions, or which were felt to have justified their evil. It does not seem likely, under our admittedly vague conception of normativity, that actual-internal states

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[52] Korsgaard. *The Sources of Normativity,* 15.

of agents like us carry enough normative weight to suffice as sources of normativity or normative reasons. The evaluations of agents like us really do not *seem,* upon deep reflection, to carry such normative weight, for the reasons covered above, which is exactly the opposite of what we would expect if, under our concept of normativity, such actual-internal states could serve as sufficient sources of normativity.

These remarks apply to reasons in general--both instrumental and non-instrumental. But consider that non-instrumental reasons to Φ are reasons to Φ for Φ-ing's own sake. To suggest that the normativity of NNIRs is able to be fully explained by or grounded in actual-internal states, one suggests that the actual-internal, evaluative states of agents like us have such significant normative weight *in themselves* as to provide a normative reason to Φ for Φ-ing's own sake, or to make our reasons to Φ for Φ-ing's own sake normative rather than merely explanatory. But this boils down to the suggestion that an agent's preference for Φ can carry so much normative weight as to justify, compel, or obligate them to Φ. But why would we suggest such a thing, in light of the depravity which these states are capable of possesing? It seems that, even if the actual-internal evaluative states of agents like us *do* carry intrinsic normative weight, they do not carry enough weight to, by themselves, justify, compel or obligate those agents to pursue or act in accordance with those desires for the sake of those desires or what is desired in itself.

Thus, if there is any source of normativity for normative, non-instrumental reasons, then it seems that, probably, our actual-internal evaluative states are not enough, and so we are in need of either counterfactual-internal or external sources of normativity.

(III.3.3) The Second Argument from Normative Weight (NW*)

Similar concerns can be raised against counterfactual-internal reasons (though the case is harder to make). As in NW above, if our concept of normative, non-instrumental reasons did not

necessarily require external sources of normativity, then we would expect to judge, upon deep reflection, that counterfactual-internal sources could be intrinsic sources of normativity. But, if counterfactual-internal sources of normativity could be intrinsic sources of normativity, then they would have to be, without external reasons, normatively significant, to such an extent that they could provide us with obligating or justifying, non-instrumental reasons to act.

But, as mentioned in argument NW above, human desires and commitments, as well as the desires and commitments of rational beings like us, do not in themselves carry much normative weight (at least, this is a view that the intuition of the angsty pulls them towards). If we do not give sufficient normative weight to the actual-internal evaluations of agents like us, why should we give that weight to the evaluative states we *would* choose under certain ideal conditions? For to suppose that our counterfactual-internal evaluative states can provide normative reasons presupposes that the evaluative states we would have under certain conditions have normative weight which our actual-internal evaluative states do not. But what makes such a difference between our counterfactual- and actual-internal evaluative states? There seems to be no difference in the *sort* of evaluative states they are: for counterfactual and actual evaluative states are still both *evaluative states of agents like us,* and we have judged that those, *in themselves,* lack sufficient normative weight already, even after deep reflection on the nature of those sorts of states (that is, when the angsty enter into the process of reflective endorsement, they seem to conclude contrary to Korsgaard).

Another way to put this might be the following: the faculty which would produce counterfactual-internal states is either the same faculty which produces our actual-internal states, or is a faculty which is highly similar to those which produce our actual-internal states. Why suppose that the counterfactual deliverances of such a faculty have more normative weight than its actual deliverances?

A Kantian might respond by trying to show what sets actual and counterfactual evaluative states apart in terms of normative weight. In order for the Kantian to show that it is

not ad hoc to think of counterfactual-internal states as sufficiently normatively weighty, the Kantian must show two things. (a) that there are some features of counterfactual-internal states which confer on them greater normative weight than actual-internal states. (b) that we have reason to suspect that these difference-making features and their ability to confer greater normative weight do not depend on external sources of normativity. If the Kantian cannot deliver on (b), we have no reason to think of counterfactual-internal states as themselves sufficient, and so the difference-making features of counterfactual-internal reasons could not overcome our suspicion (drawn out in NW) that the sorts of things internal states are carry insufficient weight. Argument NW has shifted the epistemic burden onto those who think of counterfactual-internal states as sufficiently weighty.

But can any differences posited between actual-internal and counterfactual-internal states (a) confer sufficient normative weight on some counterfactual-internal states and (b) *without help from external sources of normativity?* Can they, (b) without any help from external sources of normativity, explain (c) why actual-internal states are inadequately weighty while counterfactual-internal states are adequately weighty?[53]

To be clear, Kantians like Korsgaard do not ground normative force in counterfacts, but in the actual nature of reason. On this view, it is not that counterfacts (about what internal states agents would have in ideal circumstances) make or ground the truth of reasons-claims or that these counterfacts make reasons normatively forceful (the counterfacts themselves are not sources of normativity). Rather, these sorts of counterfacts are made true by the actual nature of rationality or judgemental processes within all rational agents, and it is these features of rationality or rational processes which are sources of normativity or grounds of reasons. For Korsgaard, it is not the truth of some abstract proposition about what I would value (the true

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[53] Dr. Eric Reitan, commenting on a manuscript of this essay, put the question like this: "can we adequately explain why the internal states possessed under ideal conditions are more normative than under other conditions? Why do these conditions qualify as ideal without reference to some external source(s) of normativity?"

claim that I would, after engaging in the process of reflective endorsement, judge Φ-ing to be necessary, good, permissible, desirable, etc) which 'makes' me have a reason, or 'makes' my reason normatively forceful or authoritative. Rather, it is that which this true proposition refers to or describes which performs this function. It is the nature of the deliberating, inferring and judging faculty within me that confers normativity on reasons or which constitutes what I have reason to do. An agent having a reason to Φ *is just* for that agent to have the sort of cognitive faculties which *would* cause one to judge that Φ-ing is necessary or good. Likewise, a reason or moral rule is 'made' normatively forceful for us by the actual nature of the rational faculties already within us. Regardless of ignorance or the contents of my consciously held evaluative states, my reason actually demands that I Φ, and my reason doing so *constitutes* normatively forceful reasons, *makes* moral claims normatively forceful, and *obligates* us to follow them.[54] For externalistic moral realists, the normative force of reasons flows from the nature or attributes of entities external to agents, whatever these might be. For the Kantian, the normative force of reasons emanates from certain features of the rationality within rational agents. Both these views deny the Humean claim that normativity emanates from the actual *preferences* of agents. What sets them apart is not their commitment to preference-independence, but their theory of

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[54] For Korsgaard, these counterfactual-internal states are the commitments to certain self-conceptions that rational agents have. Obligation, reasons, and the normativity of certain imperatives arises *for each individual* as a result of the rationality *within each individual* actually being such that it endorses or finds as necessary certain actions, beliefs, and imperatives. "Finally, I believe that the answer must appeal, in a deep way, to our sense of who we are, to our sense of identity. As I have been emphasizing, morality can ask hard things of us, sometimes even that we should be prepared to sacrifice our lives in its name. This places a demanding condition on a successful answer to the normative question: it must show that sometimes doing the wrong thing is as bad or worse than death. And for most human beings on most occasions, the only thing that could be as bad or worse than death is something that for us amounts to death--not being ourselves anymore" (Korsgaard. *The Sources of Normativity,* 17-18). "To be motivated 'by reason' is normally to be motivated by one's reflective endorsement of incentives and impulses, including affections, which arise in a natural way" (Korsgaard. *The Sources of Normativity,* 127.). "...the fact that you will an end is a reason for the end. It's not exactly that there has to be a *further reason;* it's just that **you** must take the act of **your own will** to be normative f**or you**. And of course this cannot mean merely that you are *going* to pursue the end. It means that **your** willing the end gives it a normative status **for you**, that **your** willing the end in a sense makes it good" (Korsgaard. "The Normativity of Instrumental Reason," 227) [emphasis mine]. "The answer in the case of the instrumental principle is that I make a law *for me*" (Ibid, 228).

what subjects confer normativity. In other words, explaining normative force by citing counterfactual-internal states is to explain normative force by citing actual features or states of real entities (minds with rational faculties) or processes (the processes of minds with rational faculties). An externalist realist and Kantian both attempt to explain the normativity of reasons by pointing to something other than our actual preferences which they consider capable of 'making' reasons normative or 'conferring' on us reasons. Any disagreement will regard whether the entities posited have such a power (and, in my view, talking of 'normative weight' is a heuristic tool for deciding whether or not they have such powers).

After clarifying the general form of Kantian approaches, the problems raised above should be understood as thus: (a) *are any of the actual features of the rational faculties within agents like us capable of 'making' or fully explaining the normative force of reasons?*; (b) *are any of the actual features of the rational faculties within agents like us capable of 'making' or explaining the normative force of reasons on their own (without any appeal to aspects of the world external to rational agents)?; (c) are there any differences between the actual features of the rational faculties within agents like us and the easily corruptible or depraved actual-internal evaluative states mentioned above, such that these differences would explain why the former are capable of 'making' or explaining the normative force of reasons on their own, but not the latter?* (I will continue to call these sorts of features 'counterfactual-internal evaluative states,' since they are the features or states which make counterfacts about the internal states of agents true.)

It seems to me that there are four features of counterfactual-internal evaluative states which may explain their greater normative weight: the *contents* of counterfactual-internal states, the *conditions* under which counterfactual-internal states are formed, the *faculties* which produce counterfactual-internal states, and the *universality* of counterfactual-internal states.[55]

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[55] Some sources of normativity, for Korsgaard, can be the actual-internal states of agents like us. For instance, she takes it that all agents are *actually* committed to the belief that agents like themselves are

However, though each of these difference-making features (of counterfactual-internal states) does seem to confer more normative weight on counterfactual-internal states than merely actual-internal states, I do not see any reason to think that they do so without depending on external sources of normativity. For it may be supposed that each feature confers greater normative weight only because those features draw their own weight from external sources of normativity (i.e. the nature of these features themselves). And so pointing to these features of counterfactual-internal evaluative states does nothing to defeat our charge of ad-hocness.

If one supposed that the contents of a certain set of counterfactual-internal states are the source of the normative weight of those states, then it seems plausible to say that something external to (independent of) our internal states would be serving as the ultimate source of normativity. For it seems that the *contents* of counterfactual-internal evaluative states, and not the internal states with those contents, provide the normative weight to these internal states. For instance, our actual-internal states which constitute our favoring loving our neighbor are insufficiently weighty to be sources of normativity for our reason to love our neighbor. But why would our counterfactual-internal states, which would constitute our favoring loving our neighbor, be sufficient? On this view, our actually having certain faculties which would lead us to

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intrinsically valuable (Korsgaard, 121). Yet, still, Korsgaard posits that these actual-internal states derive their normative weight/authority--their ability to serve as sources of normativity--from a certain set of counterfactual-internal states of rational agents. To defend the normative weight of these further counterfactual-internal states, Korsgaard, as our token Kantian, posits that this authority-conferring-difference lies in both the faculties responsible for producing counterfactual-internal states and their universality or inescapability, and seems to think that these differences make them more weighty than actual-internal states. Korsgaard suggests the following for universality: because rational creatures like us cannot fail to value ourselves as intrinsically valuable, every rational creature like us would form some internal evaluative state in favor of *what we are* (Korsgaard, 121). But it would be inconsistent, per Korsgaard, to extend that value to oneself and not to all other humans. Thus, because the evaluative states of rational agents are logically consistent, a being like us, under the ideal condition of rationality, will form an internal evaluative state which considers all beings like us as ends in themselves. "We have no option but to say yes" [to such an internal state, that is, to endorse it] (Korsgaard, 123). From this counterfact about *all* agents like us, the universality of a core counterfactual-internal state follows, and from this commitment, Korsgaard thinks one can begin to build at least a minimal moral system. Further, the faculties which would produce these internal states are purely faculties which all *rational* creatures share. That is, the faculties of *rationality* and those which enable intensional-reflexivity (Korsgaard, 122-123) are responsible for producing the foundational internal-states from which morality is built. Actual-internal states may, in contrast to this set of counterfactual-internal states, be formed by processes and faculties which are not rational, such as when irrational biases form.

endorse loving our neighbor as necessary or valuable is not what explains why we have reason to love our neighbor, nor why that reason is normatively forceful. Rather, it seems at least equally plausible to think of the normative force of reasons to love our neighbor as stemming from the nature of loving our neighbor (which is external to us). Likewise, the killer's actual-internal states in favor of sharpening his knife are insufficient for him having a reason to do so, but why are his counterfactual-internal states in favor of seeking psychiatric help sufficient for him having a reason to do so? At the very least, I see no reason to think that the rational faculties within me can do what my preferences cannot. For supposing that the faculties within me demand certain attitudes and behaviors seems theoretically unnecessary to explain the normativity of my reasons or why I have reasons. Why think it necessary to include facts about our faculties in the explanation for the normativity of our reason to love our neighbor? The object-given, externalist explanation seems sufficient, though the 'metaphysical mechanism' by which the nature of loving our neighbor grounds reasons or makes reasons normatively forceful is not fully understood.[56] Thus, attempting to postulate the *contents* of counterfactual-internal evaluative states as setting them apart from actual-internal states (with regard to their power to confer normativity on reasons) seems at best ad hoc, and at worst a covert way of embracing externalism.

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[56] By 'metaphysical mechanism of grounding or making,'' I mean a detailed account of *how* the features of objects can be reason-conferring or normativity-conferring. We can *sufficiently* explain the birth of a child by citing general descriptions of the powers of objects (the ability for a male to impregnate a female, the ability of a pregnant female to 'grow' a baby and bring it to term so long as they push during labor) and specific facts (that a male did so impregnate a female, that this female was capable of growing a baby within her, that there was nothing standing in the way of the natural processes of pregnancy, and that, during labor, the female pushed the baby out). Yet this is not a full explanation—it does not tell us of the mechanisms behind impregnating a female, the mechanisms of the processes for growing babies, nor the mechanisms of pushing out babies during labor. It seems a good enough explanation of childbirth, but something more is wanted. Regarding sources of normativity and reasons, that certain attributes of entities external to us *can* confer normative force or ground reasons seems a good enough explanation, but not a very detailed one. This tells us nothing of *how* these attributes do so, or what this relation of making amounts to. We want something like a detailed causal chain, as in explaining pregnancy. However, looking for such a mechanism of grounding may be wrongheaded. For, presumably, normative force is an imperceptible, immaterial aspect of reality, and it is not clear what a causal mechanism for immaterial realities would be beyond, perhaps, that one immaterial object existing is sufficient for another to exist. The realm of immaterial beings is strange.

Likewise, explaining the difference in weight between actual and counterfactual internal states in terms of a difference between *conditions* or *faculties* is also to posit either an external source of normativity or to arbitrarily insist that certain features internal to agents 'just are' capable of conferring normative weight. For positing that the difference in normative weight between our easily depraved actual-internal states and our counterfactual-internal states lies in the conditions under which counterfactual-internal states would be formed seems to make their normative weight dependent on something external to agents: the conditions which those agents might find themselves in. Further, to say that this difference in normative weight (between our actual preferences and the preferences we would have) is due to our actual preferences being caused by different sets of faculties than the preferences we would have (under ideal conditions) seems ad hoc. For even if reasons or normative force flow (in part) from faculties which the Kantian takes to be more normatively weighty than those causing our actual preferences, the question can be raised: *are these faculties by themselves sources of normativity, or do they derive their sources of normativity from something external to agents?* The Kantian, to avoid relying on external sources of normativity, *must* give some reason to think that these faculties are by themselves sufficiently weighty or powerful. I am aware of no such reasons besides the *feeling* of sufficiency. And, even though I grant that a strong *sense* of sufficiency may warrant us in taking certain conditions as sufficient sources of normativity (Chapter V.2.4), the angsty, even after prolonged reflection, are given to feel that these faculties are insufficient by themselves! Thus, to treat certain faculties as capable of conferring normative force or reasons while denying that other faculties have this power (i.e. those which produce our actual, corruptible evaluations) seems either arbitrary.

Further, the universality of certain counterfactual-internal judgements does not seem to be a good explanation for the normative difference between actual- and counterfactual-reasons. For it is also true that, under certain, less-than-ideal conditions, rational agents would universally endorse the immoral or irrational. Universality *in itself* does not seem to be able to

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ground normativity. And, even if one could place such value on universality itself in order to explain why universality can confer some counterfactual-internal states more normative weight than actual-internal states, then one's explanation of the normative weight of some counterfactual-internal states is dependent on sources of normativity not reducible to the internal states of agents themselves, and not dependent on agents.[57]

Allow me to summarize this argument: if counterfactual-internal states can plausibly serve as sources of the normativity of NNIRs, then they are able to do so only by having certain difference-making features which confer on them greater normative weight (power) than actual-internal states. But the ability of each difference-making feature to confer greater normative weight on counterfactual-internal states (than actual-internal states) can plausibly be taken to function as or depend on external sources of normativity, so that these difference making features seem arbitrary. Further, I argued that we have reason to suspect the internal states of agents like us to be inadequately weighty (in NW). The Kantian, in order to overcome NW*, must give us reason to think that these difference-making features need not themselves depend on external sources of normativity. But because it is at least equally plausible to suppose that these difference-making features *do* depend on external sources, they have not overcome NW*. Overall, then, I find it implausible to suppose that counterfactual-internal states of agents like us can plausibly serve as sources of normativity for our NNIRs. That is, I find it plausible to think that our NNIRs must rely on sources of normativity other than the internal states of agents like us. And since sources are either internal or external, I find it plausible to think that our NNIRs must rely on external sources of normativity.

I might express the gist of arguments NW and NW* much more simply: upon even deep reflection, the angsty find it that our actual-internal states are insufficient for normative reasons

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[57] It may be that universality of evaluative judgement indicates that these judgement are right or warranted, so that, if rational agents universally judge that we have normative reason to act, then it is likely that we do have such reasons. But the question is not whether universality can indicate normative force, but whether it can itself be sufficient for normative force.

(NW), and also find counterfactual-internal states to be insufficient (NW*). That is, upon deep reflection, the angsty cannot see how either Humean- or Kantian-internalist solutions suffice to explain the normativity of our reasons, particularly our non-instrumental reasons, and, further, they are attempted to judge that they are insufficient given the easily depraved nature of these states.[58]

(III.4) Summary of Arguments for CC6*

In sum, argument EP attempted to show that external sources of normativity were plausible explanations for our having normative, non-instrumental reasons. A weakened version of EP, WEP, was given, arguing that, for any of our foundational, non-instrumental reasons, their normative force on us is plausibly explained by external sources of normativity. Argument NW attempted to defeat the claim that "actual-internal sources of normativity can be sufficient sources of the normativity of non-instrumental reasons" with appeals to the insufficient normative weight of actual-internal states. Finally, NW* appealed also to normative weight, and raised the challenge of arbitrariness against the Kantian (who posits counterfactual-internal states as sufficient sources of normativity): what explains the great difference in normative weight between actual-internal and counterfactual-internal states? Since the potential Kantian responses were found inadequate to overcome this charge, NW* concluded that, probably, counterfactual-internal states are insufficient sources of normativity. Thus, the conclusions of NW and NW* imply that, if there are sources of normativity, then they must be external.

Ultimately, the conclusions of the arguments from Chapters (II) and (III) suggest that the internal evaluative states of agents can align with or violate reasons, and also that these states

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[58] To clarify, my objection to internalist theories in NW* is that this normative force seems to require sufficiently normatively weighty sources of normativity, and that the actual features of rational agents qua rational agents which Kantians posit as sufficient sources of normativity do not have this weight (or, at least, I see no reason to think they have this weight). Similarly, in EP, I argued that the intrinsic properties of objects external to rational agents are metaphysically responsible for (cause, make, ground) the normative force of reasons. For Kantians, even though the intrinsic properties of external objects are important, perhaps even necessary, elements in grounding normativity, the force of normative reasons stems only from the reasonable faculties themselves.

can align with or violate the sources of normativity (if there are any), but that this alignment or violation cannot adequately ground or explain the existence of normative, non-instrumental reasons. These arguments lead us to an overall picture of the moral world which requires an external guarantor or source of reasons.

In the next Chapter, I will further explicate absurd angst by drawing attention to the various painful consequences of denying the existence of external reasons and sources of normativity. This Chapter will, necessarily, retread a bit of ground, framing what has already been discussed in slightly different ways. I beg my readers for patience, as I seek to explain to myself the causes of my suffering.

CHAPTER IV

THE PAINFUL FEATURES OF AN ABSURD WORLD

So far, I have attempted to describe the sort of philosophical angst that arises out of moral

speculation, particularly from speculation regarding ultimate or final reasons. This "absurd

angst," as I have called it, is a worry that there are no normatively forceful, non-instrumental

reasons to engage in the activities one assumed to be morally significant prior to deep moral

speculation. Two sets of conceptual commitments were posited as causes of consciously held

worries over reasons (though, I admit, these conceptual commitments are much more sterile

than what is probably the true conceptual causes of absurd angst within the minds of the

angsty). Both explanations of absurd angst put forward involve attributing an externalizing

tendency to angsty thinkers. One is prone to externalize moral normativity in virtue of being

drawn to think of normative, non-instrumental reasons (or at least *ultimate* non-instrumental

reasons) as external reasons, or as relying for their normative force on external sources of

normativity. Paired with an inclination to moral rationalism, angsty thinkers' externalization of

reasons make moral truths and authority contingent upon mysterious and unanalyzed

metaphysical entities: "external reasons" or "external sources of normativity." Unable to verify

the existence of these sorts of entities, or to even make sense of what these sorts of things

would be, the angsty begin to worry that there are no such reasons or sources, and so come to doubt important moral truths or the authority of morality.

Up until this point, then, I have described a way of understanding the normative question, and have postulated two potential causes of moral skepticism. But I have not, in any detail, worked out why skeptical worries over moral normativity are painful. What is it about an absurd world--a world without normative, non-instrumental reasons--which is problematic for the angsty? Further, what is it about a world without *external* reasons or sources of normativity which pains the angsty (besides, of course, a lack of normative non-instrumental reasons)? What do external reasons and sources provide which would be lost in an absurd world?

Below, I describe several painful features of a world in which moral agents have either no normative, non-instrumental reasons or external reasons. I have labeled these features "F1-F8."

(F1) A Lack of Reasons and Rationality: We view ourselves as a rational species, and feel that our identities are heavily bound up with our status as rational animals. We have come to value what we take to be good reasons in themselves, and desire to have them. The suggestion that there are neither external reasons nor external sources of normativity strip morality of reasons all-together, given that they would, if our angsty intuitions described in the previous Chapters are correct, rule out normative, non-instrumental reasons.

A lack of reasons for our ultimate ends and moral truths (which must be normative and non-instrumental) pains us, I think, because we value having good (normative) reasons for its own sake, or because we value being rational (at least in our most significant endeavors) for its own sake.

Regarding our valuing normative reasons for their own sake, consider what James, explicitly pulling from Tolstoy, writes:

> *In the practical life of the individual, we know how his whole gloom or glee about any present fact depends on the remoter schemes and hopes to which it stands related. Its significance and framing give it the chief part of its value. Let it be known to lead*

nowhere, and however agreeable it may be in its immediacy, its glow and gilding varnish.[59]

I take James to be describing the psychology of the angsty: those who are susceptible to absurd angst will have evaluations of Φ which depend substantially on how Φ fits into their overall scheme of ends. That is, a person's positive evaluation of Φ will be shaped by the *instrumentality* of Φ in achieving their ends. For whatever reason (and I refrain from passing critical judgement), when one comes to realize that the ends themselves "lead to nowhere," the positive evaluation of Φ drops out or is tarnished. This "leading to nowhere" in Tolstoy seems to describe a lack of a rational basis for pursuing our ultimate and final ends.[60] Since James explicitly identifies Tolstoy's existential condition with the one he diagnoses in others, this "leading to nowhere" in James is likely to be the same lack of reasons. Any views which deny the existence of external, non-instrumental moral reasons pain us, because we recognize that our final ends must "lead to nowhere" in this sense. A person might enjoy or value the ends they were pre-theoretically committed to, yet still be prone to this sort of despair. When I have felt this pain, I have not suddenly ceased to value myself and others, and my motivation to pursue well-being was not totally undermined. I felt that the significance of these pursuits, however, had diminished, and I became (and regularly become) dejected.[61] Since this pain may arise despite one still having psychological motivation to pursue these ends, and seems to arise just from a feeling that there are no *reasons* (or no *good* reasons) to pursue one's final ends, it seems to me that a lack of normative, non-instrumental reasons to pursue our final ends is painful in itself.

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[59] James, William. "Lectures IV-VII." In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 141.

[60] I take it that there are two ways in which reasons or ends can avoid "leading to nowhere." First, by leading to another end which we desire, like experiences of pleasure, ad infinitum. Second, by terminating in some final end(s) we consider to be so valuable and worthy that, though the chain of our ends as well as our experiences of those final, very valuable ends are finite, those ends being attained is able to make life worth living, has provided good reasons to live, etc.

[61] Camus notes something similar: the pain and fear of absurdity does not motivate the angsty to commit suicide, or to simply stop caring for themselves. Rather, valuing well-being and striving to live are deeply entrenched habits. (Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus,* 6.)

And so, a world without external reasons and sources of normativity is perhaps a painful prospect because it threatens to strip us of something we value for its own sake.

Alternatively, one may be pained by a lack of normative, non-instrumental reasons because one feels that this would no longer allow oneself to identify primarily as a *rational* being. As Korsgaard and Scanlon note, there are two dominant approaches to defining talk of reasons and rationality: define rationality in terms of (a correct response to) reasons, or reasons in terms of (the demands of) rationality.[62] If one is given to conceiving of rationality as being capable of appropriately responding to reasons, and one finds themselves doubting the existence of normative reasons (as a result of doubting the existence of ultimate reasons), then the ability to understand oneself as a rational being will be greatly diminished. Identifying oneself as a rational being *to some extent* might be consistent with denying the existence of normative reasons, if one takes it that rationality might also consist in responding to merely pragmatic (non-normative) reasons. Still, to deny the existence of normative, non-instrumental reasons will be to deny oneself the ability to respond to a whole realm of reasons which one might have previously thought existed. So, in the eyes of those who previously thought of their rationality as a response to a host of normative reasons, this will severely limit the profundity of rationality, if it does not strip rationality of its value altogether.[63] It may be, then, that doubting the existence of normative, non-instrumental reasons (and so external reasons and sources) is *painful* due to the fact that we value rationality for its own sake, and feel that our rationality would be lessened or ruled out if our doubts were realized.

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[62] (Korsgaard, Christine. *The Normativity of Instrumental Reason,* 225.) (Scanlon, T.M. *Being Realistic About Reasons,* 8.)

[63] One could argue that rationality has intrinsic value only if there are *normative* reasons to value it as such. But this would, on our angsty conceptual schemes, require normative, non-instrumental reasons. So, if one is given to the sort of angst I have already described, one will still lose something valuable they thought they previously had--morally significant or valuable rationality. And this will suggest a lessening of one's own moral value.

(F2) Lack of Intrinsic Value and its Consolation: Earlier I wrote that morality and moral considerations are important due to their supposed ability to console. Consolation in the face of suffering is sought by casting suffering as instrumental to achieving some intrinsic good or intrinsically valuable end. The role of art in providing an artist with some sort of consolation reveals the power that intrinsic value has to console (at least pre-theoretically). Everyday aesthetic judgements appeal to the intrinsic value of art as a way to ground its importance. The intrinsic value of art is also used by many as a means for consolation--an artist may seek to live past their death or overcome their otherwise painful life by creating something longer-lasting and intrinsically valuable. The artist might describe their ambition as contributing to the goodness of the world by adding one more valuable object to it, and find themselves consoled by that suggestion.

Further, appeals to one's own intrinsic value play an important role in ethical judgements. For even the most self-absorbed value themselves as if they were intrinsically valuable, so that many can, despite great differences in moral character, assent to foundational moral principles, if only to aid their own self-preservation. Some authors have described belief in one's own intrinsic value as, at the very least, a foothold for morality.[64] Intrinsic value and ascriptions of intrinsic value are thus important features of human life and morality (since the values of things are taken to ground or shape our duties toward them), our view of the world (since the values of things are taken to explain and set their place in the life of a human

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[64] Korsgaard takes an Enlightenment conception of the self as being impossible to avoid (Korgaard, *The Sources of Normativity,* 117, 123.) and argues that this enlightenment conception can force one to extend this same conception to others (*Sources of Normativity,* Lecture 4). A belief in at least one's own intrinsic value as a "broader, ultimate concern from which it is impossible to step back" is hinted at by Nagel in (Nagel, Thomas. "The Absurd," 155) and developed more fully, but through talk of an external point of view, in (Nagel, Thomas. "Universality and the Reflective Self." In *The Sources of Normativity*.) Nagel seems to think of a recognition of one's own worth as leading one to entering into this external point of view, if for no other reason than to preserve their own ability to consider themselves and demand that others consider them intrinsically valuable/worthy.

society), and our efforts to console ourselves (since the values of things are taken to impart fleeting life with non-fleeting import).

Given their assent to moral rationalism, however, the angsty will be drawn to think of intrinsic value as requiring normative reasons, which in turn require non-instrumental reasons. It may even be the case that the angsty person's concept of intrinsic value as requiring non-instrumental reasons informs their inclination to moral rationalism, rather than being informed by moral rationalism. It seems highly plausible to think that some subject is intrinsically valuable only if any agent who comes into contact with that subject has a normative reason to value that subject as intrinsically valuable, or as an end in itself, regardless of its utility. But, the sort of normative reasons which one could have to value some subject for its own sake, regardless of its instrumental value, seem most naturally to be non-instrumental reasons, although it may be that one has such a strong *instrumental* reason to value something for its own sake that this *instrumental reason* is a reason to value it regardless of its utility. In either case, however, some subjects having intrinsic value requires, for the angsty, the existence of normative reasons to value that subject, which in turn requires normative, non-instrumental reasons.

The intuition that intrinsic value requires external sources or reasons may be strengthened by arguments like those given previously regarding the contributions of intrinsically valuable entities to the normative force of non-instrumental reasons. It was argued (in Chapter II especially) that there is a tight link between the intrinsic properties of valuable entities, or the valuable, intrinsic properties of entities, and our normative, non-instrumental reasons to respond to them. Spelling out what these intuitions might reveal about the link between intrinsic value and reasons, however, must be left for another time.[65]

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[65] The link between value and reasons is so tight that some have given accounts of value which reduce value to the presence of reasons. See the following for introductions to these accounts: (Scanlon, T. M. "Wrongness and Reasons," 10); (Crisp, Roger. "Value, Reasons and the Structure of Justification.")

(F3) Lack of Moral Significance for Finite and Historical Goods: Recognizing that human lives and efforts are finite brings one to ask "why bother?," and a natural answer to this question is to posit that human activities, however finite, are morally significant. Tolstoy seems to have been brought into his angsty state by fully realizing that his future was to lie with dirt and worms.[66] James, again commenting on Tolstoy, also takes the recognition of finitude to be the catalyst for this angst.[67] Morality is invoked to answer the question by preserving the significance of human life. But morality does this by positing the intrinsic value of human lives and efforts--our lives and projects are felt to be worth it because they have intrinsic value or connect our lives to ends with intrinsic value, and this intrinsic value is not stripped away by the finitude of the valuable. But human life having intrinsic value or being connected to intrinsically valuable ends is problematic without external, non-instrumental reasons (F2). So, to the extent that the moral significance of the finite depends on its intrinsic value or relation to intrinsically valuable ends, moral significance of the finite depends on the existence of external, non-instrumental moral reasons or sources of normativity.

(F4) Lack of Meaningfulness: On certain conceptions of the meaning of life, meaning is (a) a key component of the good life, (b) naturally desired by human beings, and (c) a

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[66] Tolstoy's primary pain is over moral significance: he asks for a reason to live or work in the face of a painfully finite existence. His consolation is found in his new religious beliefs, including a belief that this existence--that man and it's goals--are related to the infinite, and, in response to coldness, that this infinite positively regards us (Tolstoy, Leo, 58-59). He does not respond by giving powerful moral reasons, but by eliminating finitude, death, being forgotten and coldness (Tolstoy, Leo, 46, 59). Without finitude, the painful demand for reasons seems to be less painful, and we may content ourselves without finding *reasons* to live when we suppose that our lives are enjoyable overall, and will be enjoyably extended into eternity. But this does not remove the need for a *reason* totally, if the desire for reasons (F1) is genuine.

[67] "Mankind is in a position similar to that of a set of people living on a frozen lake, surrounded by cliffs over which there is no escape, yet knowing that little by little the ice is melting, and the inevitable day drawing near when the last film of it will disappear, and to be drowned ignominiously will be the human creature's portion. The merrier the skating, the warmer and more sparkling the sun by day, and the ruddier the bonfire at night, the more poignant the sadness with which one must take in the meaning of the total situation." (James, William, 142.)

relationship between one's private/personal ends, commitments, projects, activities and those which are worthy of love or pursuit in themselves.[68] But as Nagel notes,

> *One may try to escape the position by seeking broader ultimate concerns. From which it is impossible to step back… Those seeking to supply their lives with meaning usually envision a role or function in something larger than themselves… But a role in some large enterprise cannot confer significance unless that enterprise is itself significant.*[69]

That is to say, talking of significance or worthiness of love and commitment seems to involve the notions of intrinsic value and/or normative reasons. Significance itself, as I have described in F3, invokes these concepts, and thus, on these conceptions of meaning, and under our angsty conceptual commitments, meaningfulness requires the existence of external, non-instrumental reasons to value, love, commit oneself to, etc. A world without such reasons would then be a world without (this sort of) meaningfulness, nor the consolation which sincere and informed belief in meaningfulness of one's actions can provide.

(F5) Disturbing Relativism, Easily Escapable Morality, and Moral Authority: As argued in Chapter II.2, a denial of categorical reasons to pursue our ultimate ends results in a disturbing relativism about normative reasons, under which moral wantons are able to escape the demands of reasons just by being moral wantons. But categorical reasons are unconditional reasons--they are reasons to Φ which hold regardless of one's actual commitments. So, categorical reasons must be either external or counterfactual-internal. Given the angsty conceptual commitments of the previous Chapters, only external, non-instrumental reasons will suffice, according to the angsty, for categorical reasons. In the minds of the angsty, then, reasons to be moral would be easily escapable without external, non-instrumental reasons. But, given a commitment to moral rationalism, the angsty will also believe that moral obligation and blameworthiness require normative reasons to conform to moral standards. Thus, moral

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[68] Susan Wolff develops most clearly this conception of meaning/meaningfulness in (Wolff, Susan. "Meaningfulness: A Third Dimension of the Good Life."). Michael Zao picks up Wolff's conception and attempts to make it cohere with what he calls "teleological moral realism" (Zhao, Michael. "Meaning, Moral Realism, and the Importance of Morality.").

[69] (Nagel, Thomas. "The Absurd," 155.)

reasons, obligations, and blameworthiness would become grossly escapable without external, non-instrumental reasons.

This dependence on external, non-instrumental reasons for moral inescapability also has implications for the authority of morality. I take it that an awareness or sense of the authority of morality is something like a sense of the far-reaching, normative *force* of morality. I sense that I ought to bring myself into conformity with the moral law; I sense that others ought to value what I take to be intrinsically valuable. We take it that the reasons we have to be moral and the reasons others have to adopt our evaluations are not based merely on whim, but are *compelling*. This same sense of moral authority which strikes us as compelling and forceful also leads us to expect this same recognition in others. If morality is authoritative over us, it seems that the authority of morality would bind others like us (for it would be ad hoc to suppose otherwise). The force of the intuition that we are subjected to the authority of morality is equaled by intuitions that the morally obstinate ought to be moral as well, even those who obstinately refuse to recognize morality as authoritative, or who are uncommitted to the ends which we take to be the ends of moral behavior. For just as legal authority binds those who disregard the law, we sense that moral authority cannot be escaped by merely refusing to acknowledge it. When confronted with heinous acts done by those who appear to be without a conscience, or who appear to have willingly calculated that their wrongdoing was in their best interest, we do not ordinarily hesitate to feel that the wrongdoer has *good reasons* to refrain from doing wrong, even if it would have undermined the realizations of their desires or goals. And so too do we take the selfish serial killer to have been obligated to refrain from murder, in spite of the fact that we may suspect that the killer had made it their goal to kill, and had consciously disregarded the dictates of morality, setting immoral ends as their goals. Surely, also, we may blame the killer for killing. Our inclination is to assume that those disinterested in being moral still have compelling, normative reasons to be moral, and are likewise obligated to be moral, even though we cannot always, if ever, explain what these reasons consist in.

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If we are to trust our moral intuitions regarding moral authority, it seems we are to be committed to recognizing as obligated and blameworthy (and as acting against moral reasons which they possess) even those obstinate and morally uncommitted wrongdoers who baffle us. But without supposing that these wrongdoers have categorical reasons to be moral which they act against, the only reasons which they may have will depend on their own interest in and commitments to morality. And, since it is possible that their commitments are immoral, it is possible that they have no such reasons. Given the angsty drive to externalize categorical reasons, a lack of external reasons to be moral would rule out the presence of categorical reasons, and thus prevent us from accepting our moral intuitions regarding authority and its reach over the obstinate. This would then make the existence of external reasons necessary for morality to be authoritative in the far-reaching way in which we *feel* it is.

(F6) The Unreliability of Intuition: For those of us who fear the absurd, our intuitions strongly indicate (rightly or wrongly) that there are or ought to be powerful moral reasons. James, again acutely perceiving the fears we have, relates what an angsty patient might feel:

> *The strangeness is wrong. The unreality cannot be. A mystery is concealed, and a metaphysical solution must exist. If the natural world is so double-faced and unhomelike, what world, what thing is real?*[70]

To deny that there are non-instrumental reasons would be to deny that there are powerful moral reasons--to deny that there are reasons to esteem things, to pursue things, to love things despite their transience and impracticality. And this would be to discard our deepest gut feelings as unreliable. It would undermine the reliability of our less-than-indubitable intuitions, intuitive concepts and faculties, and to call into doubt our entire way of seeing the world.

(F7) Crippled Means of Moral Exhortation in the Face of Hardship: In the absence of external, non-instrumental reasons to act, we look to our desires to motivate us to act. But in the absence of powerful reasons and any desire to act, we fear we cannot be consciously motivated

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[70] James, 152.

to act for the good. For we often feel that what we ought to do conflicts with our desires, or we find there is simply a lack of desire to do what we ought. One who wishes to commit suicide may feel that they have reasons to "keep on trucking" because of the intrinsic and instrumental value of their life. We, too, attempt to convince them of their value, and this is why we so often tell the suicidal that "there are reasons to live! Life is worth it!" and in the same breath say "we love you, your suicide would hurt us!" By appealing to the intrinsic and instrumental value of life, we attempt to draw awareness to the reasons we feel they have for refraining from suicidal or self-destructive desires. But to deny that there are external reasons results in a denial of intrinsic value (F2), and of normative, forceful reasons all together (F1). If the suicidal person shares our angsty intuitions, and comes to deny the existence of external moral reasons, then by what means can we exhort them to live? Certainly not by any rational or reasons-based approach (if one takes rationality to depend on reasons, and not the other way 'round). Worse, appeals to the intrinsic value of life or persons, as we have seen, are questionable without being able to appeal to reasons. It seems to me that, if we deny the existence of external moral reasons, and yet knowingly continue to make use of the concept to persuade and exhort ourselves and others, that we are engaging in mere self-deception and manipulation.[71] And this, perhaps because of the value we place on rational deliberation and truthfulness, pains us.

(F8) Moral Futility and a Cold, Indifferent World: Finally, a denial of external, non-instrumental reasons would suggest[72] a cold or indifferent world--a world in which we could not expect our environment take us into consideration at all. In the absence of external, non-instrumental reasons, why expect any divinity or transcendent entity to look on at us with anything but total indifference (unless we anthropomorphize the entity to have human-like

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[71] David Enoch similarly attempts to show that there would be no means of settling disputes impartially, or encouraging impartial solutions to disputes. (Enoch, David. *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism,* 17-22.)

[72] Note that I do not say that a lack of reasons or external sources would *imply* a cold or indifferent world. There are too many problems surrounding voluntarism to confidently assert that a lack of reasons *implies* an indifferent God.

sentiments which cause it to positively regard us, though without reason to)? Why suspect that God, Nature or the gods would value mankind at all? One might answer by positing the intrinsic value of human beings or the created world. But the problem described in (F2) then arises: without external, non-instrumental reasons, human life can have no intrinsic value. So, unless we want to anthropomorphize God and company, or assume that God values mankind or creation necessarily yet arbitrarily, it seems there is no reason to expect that we have found in our world a home.

To be clear, while an anthropomorphised God is certainly conceivable, for many, including myself, such a thing seems improbable. A lack of reasons, then, does not *imply* that there is no God or god-like entities which care for us, but does cause some theoretical strain. There are problems in postulating a voluntaristic deity, but considering these problems would take us too far afield here. It is sufficient to explicate the worry of the angsty, and at a later time critically address these worries.

For those who have denied existence to anything like God, it is easier to see why they might worry about a cold world. With nothing like God, and nothing like moral entities or reasons, there is, plausibly, nothing "out there" which shares our concern for one another. Camus paints a picture of the world in which it is a matter of total indifference whether we live or die, love or hate, build or destroy. For most, the existence of God or some transcendent, rational aspect of Nature provide ways for making sense of mankind's value: external, fundamental reality considers mankind valuable or at least significant. Mankind features in the plans and values of God, or has proper functions placed upon it by Nature.[73] This secures humanity's relevance and provides "meaning."

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[73] Some have supposed that the important features of morality can be preserved if God or something like God exists, since human beings could positively connect their lives to that being. But even if such a being existed, there is no guarantee, without external moral reasons, that humans have been given the opportunity to positively connect their lives to that being. Further, if the important features of morality include the rational or reason-giving nature of morality, then clearly this will not do, unless we assume

Perhaps many humans have a strange, irreducible desire--a desire for a cosmic parent or moral authority who looks on at us with care. This is not just a desire for something like God to exist, but for a caring, loving divinity or cosmos. It is tragic, if no such entity exists, that we would have such a strong desire, since nothing could possibly fulfill it.

I cannot explain why it is a terrible thing that the universe is so cold without consulting my desires, which I do not suppose to be rational or even possibly fulfillable. Yet I just do desire a home-like universe, and I desire to be cared for by and connected to something like God, Nature, etc. So, to myself and many others with these desires, it would be a terrible thing for the world to be so cold. It is not unnatural to think of human beings as seeking a "cosmic home," or a sense of "cosmic belonging."

A painful implication of the irrelevance of mankind to external reality is that we also lose any reassurance that our overall lot in life is congruous with what we take to be good. For not only are there no moral reasons for *us* to secure good lives for ourselves and others, but none for anything outside of us. To doubt the existence of powerful moral reasons is to doubt that nothing, not the universe, nor the gods, have any reasons to arrange a non-painful lot in life for us. Nothing assures us that ours is a kind world, or that our lives will be overall pleasant. Even given the existence of God, why expect that God would seek to give His creatures a happy, overall pleasant life? For this seems to presuppose that God values His creatures as intrinsically valuable, and why expect that God would value His creatures in the absence of external, non-instrumental reasons to do so? Unless we anthropomorphize God, Nature, etc, it is difficult to explain why they would seek to give mankind a good lot in life. Further, the human desire for "final justice" or the realization of a highest good seem also to depend on God or Nature not only having the power to bring these ends about, but having an *interest* in bringing them about. In the absence of reasons for a being such as God to direct history to moral ends, why suppose

that there are good reasons to positively connect one's life with God or something like God. (Zhao, Michael. "Meaning, Moral Realism, and the Importance of Morality.")

that this being has any interest in doing so? To believe that there is no guarantee or assurance that one's life is moving towards overall goodness and final justice is disheartening and painful, as we desire and even expect progress toward goodness and justice.

For the angsty, then, a world without normative, non-instrumental reasons, and thus a world without external reasons or sources of normativity, is a world in which some of our deepest desires are thwarted and our conception of ourselves as rational is undermined or hampered. What's more, consolation and moral motivation is threatened by a recognition of this lack of reasons, and a new, non-normative way of viewing our world begins to encroach on us. These are, I take it, features of an absurd world that many would find painful, and it is not wonder, then, that absurd angst is not a mere skeptical doubt, but a profoundly painful angst.

CHAPTER V

TOWARDS CONSOLATION

(V.1) Consolation and its Obstacles

(V.1.1) Angst and Consolation

The angsty are driven, on my account, to their angst by two characteristics internal to them: a

tendency to externalize normative, non-instrumental reasons or sources of normativity, and a

host of conceptual commitments which demand morality and moral properties be backed by

non-instrumental reasons. Externalization of reasons and sources of normativity, paired with

these conceptual commitments, put the angsty in a theoretical bind: in order for the angsty to

continue to hold to these conceptual commitments, which recommend themselves so strongly to

the angsty mind, and still believe (without significant cognitive dissonance) in the normative

force, authority and reason-backed nature of morality, they must believe that there exist entities

corresponding to "external reasons" or "external sources of normativity." But just what external

reasons or sources *would* be *if* they existed is mysterious: even through our lengthy discussion,

there has been no attempt to make sense of "reasons" or talk of reasons, and, similarly, sources

of normativity have been given only a vague analysis. The angsty find themselves desiring the

existence of things which they do not, at least consciously, understand.

The angsty desire consolation for their angst, but it is unclear if any consolation is available. Nor is it clear what consolation might consist in. Surely, one feature of consolation in the face of absurd angst will be an easing of the pain associated with our worry. But what might ease the pain of absurd angst, and can anything ease this pain? Further, *ought* we embrace any means of consolation which we can come by, or are there *proper* and *improper* means of consolation?

(V.1.2) Evolutionary Difficulties for External Reasons and Sources of Normativity

What's more, there is a troubling epistemic problem facing the angsty. In order to understand my final, rough remarks on the nature of consolation, as well as my proposed path to consolation, it is necessary to briefly discuss the most oft-discussed form of these obstacles: Evolutionary Debunking Arguments (though thoroughly grappling with these objections to externalism and moral realism is best done elsewhere). These problems stand in the way of belief in a consoling metaethic, and so any means to consolation which involve affirming the accuracy of our angsty moral conceptual system will have to contain some sort of solution to them.

Evolutionary Debunking Arguments (EDAs) are currently the most favored kind of objection to externalist metaethical theories. Variants of these arguments are numerous,[74] and what each share is an insistence that the evolutionary history of moral faculties, concepts, and beliefs is problematic, though the features or implications of evolutionary development taken to be problematic for externalistic realism in particular differ between variants. EDAs are epistemic, and seek to show that externalism/realism, when paired with the fact of evolutionary

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[74] There are many variants of evolutionary debunking arguments in the literature. Wielenberg identifies at least five, attributing them to Harman, Ruse, Street, Joyce, and Kahane (Wielenberg, Eric. *Robust Ethics,* 146-164). Note that EDAs do *nothing* to undermine my externalist analysis of moral concepts, but rather raise problems for postulating that claims utilizing these externalist concepts can be true by correspondence to extramental/external reality/realities. For an overview of EDAs, see also: (Kahane, Guy. "Evolutionary Debunking Arguments.") To be clear, Kahane's article does not only discuss EDAs against moral realism or externalism, but the general form of EDAs against moral knowledge/justification.

development of the moral faculties or the content of our beliefs, implies (or makes likely) that our moral beliefs are unjustified. This result is taken to be implausible, since proponents of EDAs would like to preserve moral knowledge. So either one must deny externalism/realism or the evolutionary history in question, of which the latter is more burdensome to deny.

Some EDAs appeal to the distorting influences of evolutionary processes on the content of our moral intuitions or beliefs.[75] Other EDAs suggest that the evolutionary history of moral intuitions and beliefs indicates that these intuitions and beliefs are not caused by the *truth* of these beliefs, nor by contact with the entities which would correspond to the concepts utilized by these intuitions.[76] These arguments assume that, in order for a belief to be justified, either the truth of the belief must be a part of the proper explanation of the belief, or that epistemic contact with the realities which correspond to the belief must be part of the proper explanation of the belief. Since we probably do not come into epistemic contact with moral entities such as reasons or sources of normativity (for if we were in epistemic contact with them, why would we spiral into doubt over their existence?), then the justification of our moral beliefs is at least doubtful insofar as they appeal to them.

(V.1.3) Consolation as an Easing of Pain

In response to these problems, a non-speculative solution to absurd angst may recommend itself to the angsty--a means of consolation which does not involve a consoling metaphysical affirmation of reasons or their sources, but, rather, a change in desire or outlook. Reflection on this way of consoling ourselves leads us to better understand the sort(s) of consolation the angsty truly desire, and so I turn to it now.

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[75] Sharon Street states that evolutionary processes have shaped the *content* of our moral beliefs (Sharon Street. "A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value."). Justin Horn argues along the same lines (Horn, Justin. "Evolution and the Epistemological Challenge to Moral Realism.").
[76] Wielenberg, in his survey of EDAs, attributes these sorts of arguments to Harman, Ruse and Joyce. Additionally, he interprets Street's variant of the EDA as falling under this category, though it is not clear to me whether this is accurate (Weilenberg, 146-164).

One might suggest that we are *pained* by a lack of normative reasons or external sources only because we have set our hearts on them or on what we believe them to be necessary for (meaning, significance, intrinsic value, rationality, etc). If we were to stamp out or modify our externalist desires (perhaps by clinging to new, less problematic concepts of normative reasons while also learning to content ourselves with belief in moral truths making use of these new concepts), then perhaps we would no longer be pained by the non-existence of reasons which correspond to our first set of concepts. Or, perhaps, we could simply numb ourselves to the non-existence of reasons, and, by successive acts of our will, condition ourselves to no longer hope for those things which reasons are meant to preserve.

Surely if such a reconditioning was possible, we could achieve a sort of consolation. For instance, as Richard Taylor suggests, the painful bite of meaninglessness does not merely, if at all, stem from the fact that our lives, actions and goals *lead to nothing of cosmic or lasting significance,* nor from having a "point."[77] Rather, despair and angst over meaning arises from our *considering* them to lead to nothing of worth, significance, nor of having any point. For to imagine ourselves as Sisyphus eternally rolling his boulder is revolting and painful, but to imagine ourselves as Sisyphus *truly enjoying* this labor for eternity does not evoke such a strong reaction. Our angst over meaninglessness as a lack of significance or intrinsic value (in reasons jargon, our angst over meaninglessness as a lack of ends backed by external, normative reasons or sources of reasons)*,* is eliminable just by coming to evaluate our lives as sufficiently meaningful *for us.* It seems perfectly possible to change our desires and views so as to be contented with life without externally guaranteed meaning, reasons, moral authority, normativity, etc. So, the suggestion goes, why not work to do so? Why not work towards consolation of this sort?

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[77] (Taylor, Richard. "The Meaning of Life.")

This suggestion, however, should give us pause: even if we suppose that we can change our views, desires and concepts so significantly as so take away the bite of an absurd world, we can still ask ourselves whether or not it is *good* or *reasonable* to do so. And, unless we eliminate from ourselves the desire to be good or reasonable (respond to normative reasons), we will remain angsty. And so, failing to do this, the question still bothers us: should we, do we have reason to, would it be good to, numb ourselves a lack *this sort* of reasons? To *this sort* of reason-backed intrinsic value, significance, meaning, etc? Even if we did so eliminate these desires as well, all we have done is ease our pain--we have not solved the philosophical or speculative problem; we have not answered the question, "what reasons, and of what sort, do I have, if any?" Unless we can first show ourselves that *this sort* of reason does not exist--that *this sort* of value, meaning, significance does not exist--we have done nothing but ease our pain through suppression of a desire we found naturally in us, and we risk violating reasons or obligations which we might have. Thus, we could not conclude, without first finding a satisfactory answer, that it would be good to, that we ought to, or that we have reason to numb or content ourselves with less than we currently desire.

To dismiss the angsty as needlessly angsty, and to recommend to them this sort of consolation, then, is to beg the question. To be clear, I do not deny that human desires are so plastic as to be, by successive acts of the will, reshaped so significantly as to eliminate the pain of absurd angst. But we can take this means of consolation only by suppressing deep parts of ourselves, those parts which involve our nature as thinking and desiring beings; by putting away something in us which we naturally find so important in order to cope with the pain of disappointment.[78] But, since we are assuming it to be both permissible and proper to change

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[78] James thinks of the Epicurean and Stoic as offering this sort of consolation. "The Epicurean said: "Seek not to be happy, but rather to escape unhappiness; strong happiness is always linked with pain; therefore hug the safe shore, and do not tempt the deeper raptures. Avoid disappointment by expecting little, and by aiming low; and above all do not fret." The Stoic said: "The only genuine good that life can yield a man is the free possession of his own soul; all other goods are lies." Each of these philosophies is in its degree

our desires, concepts and natural impulses for the sake of consolation, then why not suppress or change our evidential or theoretical standards? We might cling to God as a source of normativity or as a means of consolation.[79] Or we might posit a moral realm, filled with "reasons" or "reason-giving entities." All this to say, that not only does this sort of consolation beg the question against the angsty externalist, but it is only one among equally effective means of desire-changing consolation, of which others make room for belief in external reasons, and so avoid suppressing *these* moral desires.

Note that I do not wish to say that those seeking this sort of consolation are immoral, irrational, etc (nor do I attribute this position to any writers in particular). If I suggested such a thing, I would not be taking my skepticism about the existence of external reasons or sources of normativity seriously. For to suggest that we have an obligation or normative reason to avoid this "cheap" consolation would be to assume that there are, in fact, external reasons or sources of normativity. Further, those who have already decided that there are no entities or properties corresponding to our concepts of external reasons or sources of normativity may only have recourse to this sort of consolation, and, if they have good reason to deny the existence of external reasons or sources, then clearly they do not beg the question.

(V.1.4) Consolation as the Peace of Reflective Equilibrium

If we understand consolation as mere easing of the painful bite of angst or a quieting of worry, then the sort of solution described above is surely consoling. Those who will not find this sort of consolation palatable or compelling will likely be those who are *undecided* on the existence of (entities corresponding to our concepts of) external reasons or sources of normativity. What, then, would the sort of consolation they desire look like, and can it be attained?

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a philosophy of despair in nature's boons...In the one the hot blood has grown cool, in the other it has become quite cold" (James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* 143).

[79] This, I take it, is exactly the solution Tolstoy embraced. He does not seem to have, in the end, come to believe or develop a theory of reasons or ethics which would console him, but turned to Russian Orthodoxy as a way to quiet his angst. He cites a sense of community, history and significance, but not a metaphysic of reasons.

It seems to me that the undecided angsty seek a deeper, more significant[80] kind of consolation: reflective equilibrium, or an easing of pain which is not at the expense of some desire or strongly held conceptual commitment.[81] This significant consolation, I suspect, is preferable over our first sort of consolation which merely eased our pain (call this *mere* consolation), and that only significant consolation involves both a philosophically and emotionally satisfying solution to absurd angst.

Korsgaard describes this sort of consolation--for her the form of an answer to the normative question--as coherence or congruence among reflective perspectives.[82] One perspective, in particular, demands the discovery of an unquestionable consideration which can serve as a moral foundation,[83] and in which one can be satisfied by finding it a sufficient ground for normative authority. This is what Korsgaard calls the *unconditioned:* "something which will bring the reiteration of 'but why must I do that?' to an end."[84] For Korsgaard, then, the only philosophical consolation to absurd angst over the normative question is the discovery of the unconditioned and reflective equilibrium (understood as balance--an elimination of tension and conflict--between differing reflective points of view).

The angsty want a consolation which allows them to retain their moral conceptual scheme and belief in the value or significance of their ultimate ends (or which allows them to revise them without incurring dissonance between the various reflective points of view or

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[80] The angsty want consolation that can ease their pain while preserving what they take to be morally valuable or significant. But moral value and significance, for the angsty, require external reasons or sources of normativity. And so, even in desiring consolation about reasons, the undecided angsty desire and make use of the notion of *reasons.*

[81] I take it that coming to no longer hold, for some good reason, one of our conceptual commitments and, as a result, realizing that we do not really desire external reasons or sources, would count as significant consolation. Perhaps an internalist may convince us of the genuine normative force of merely internal reasons--I will not rule this out here.

[82] "Thus the reflective dissonance that might lead you to reject the authority of moral claims can arise from any of a number of points of view we use in assessing motives and actions." (Korsgaard, Christine. *The Sources of Normativity,* 55.) "The understanding, when it reflects on its own operations, falls into doubt about itself and so subverts itself. But the moral sense approves of and so reinforces itself" (Korsgaard, 62).

[83] That is, a foundation for which are unable to raise questions like "why care?"

[84] (Korsgaard, Christine. *The Sources of Normativity,* 33.)

sacrificing something they feel is unable to be sacrificed).[85] The angsty want an answer to the normative question which, at least, allows them to believe in normative reasons to live, wards off relativism, subjects wantons to moral authority, and preserves normative significance and value, all without violating their strongly held theoretical commitments or evidentiary standards. And it is *this* sort of consolation that I wish, now, to discuss.

<div align="center">(V.2) Towards Significant Consolation</div>

(V.2.1) Two Kinds of Significant Consolation

Taking what has been said about reasons and sources of normativity in the previous Chapters, I offer up two forms of answers which I take to be sufficient for significant consolation. The first kind of consoling answer to the normative question will involve postulating external reasons or external sources of reasons/normativity without violating strongly held, "non-negotiable" theoretical doctrines or evidentiary standards. This would be to both endorse our angsty moral conceptual scheme as accurate, and to do so without violating any of our other strongly held theoretical commitments. Further, imagine that the angsty were to somehow discover that there existed normative, external reasons and sources of normativity, but that these reasons were reasons *against* pursuing their final ends--this would not be very consoling. This first kind of significant consolation, then, will require that the reasons and sources postulated support or back the ultimate, non-negotiable ends which we value.

The second kind of consoling answer will revise at least our conscious understanding of our expectations, desires and concepts to some extent, though without violating or demanding sacrifice of the unsacrificable. This sort of peace may be achieved by reflecting on what we *really* desire, what we *really* think we need for normative authority, value, significance, etc, and finding, as a result of this reflection, that we never *really* needed external reasons or sources of normativity, but that the externalism infecting our moral conceptual scheme stemmed from a

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[85] Of course, this is not to say that the angsty *should* or *have reason to* want such a thing.

sort of confusion. This would differ, however, from the mere consolation offered above: it would not be to sacrifice anything critical within us for the sake of easing our pain, but, instead, to cling more tightly to those natural aspects of our practical and theoretical selves.

I do not claim to know, in any more detail, what this second sort of significant consolation would look like, or how it might be pursued; after reflection on the angsty conceptual commitments laid out above, I have found nothing within myself to suggest that what I *really* desire or require for reasons, significance and value are anything but external, non-instrumental reasons or external sources of normativity. Further, I have no insight into what might count as "non-negotiable" or "unsacrificable" concepts, beliefs, standards or desires. But a better thinker might come along and reveal the angsty to themselves, and so this sort of consolation is worth describing, even if only roughly.

(V.2.2) The Negative Consolation of Internalism

I can, in these final Chapters, offer up a brief sketch of how we might pursue the first sort of significant consolation. This suggestion will, of course, be controversial and partisan (in favor of theism), and working it out in full will require much more effort than I can give it here. But, I hope, it will set an agenda for some, especially for those working within the area of overlap between Philosophy of Religion and Metaethics.

My suggestion is this: we take seriously the negative consolations of internalist, especially Kantian and Humean, accounts, while also taking seriously the positive consolation which revelatory, theistic religion can offer to us. In addition, internalist thinkers have certain epistemic considerations which may also offer positive consolation. With these three taken together—the negative consolation of internalism, the positive consolation of revelatory religion, and the positive consolation of internalism—the angsty might be consoled.

Thinkers following Kant and Hume have sought to show that there are no convincing reasons or no reflective points of view from which one could warrant forsaking moral ends and principles. I call this *negative* consolation because it aids us in reaching consolation through

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reflective equilibrium by *removing* questions or problems which threaten to throw us into reflective disequilibrium, without positively establishing the existence of, say, normative reasons or sources of normativity.

This negative approach can be helpful in at least two ways. First, by showing us how to think about those whom we take to be totally indifferent to moral ends. As Scanlon notes,[86] and as I suggested in the preface to this essay, absurd angst often sets in as a response to conflict with others: how could those close to us appear to be uninterested in moral concerns? How can anyone be so calloused and unmoved by the sufferings of others, by the works of art we take to be beautiful, by the happy laugh of a child? We might wonder how we can be in touch with "normative reasons" given our opponent's callousness to the considerations which we take to provide or be constitutive of reasons. How could, we might ask, someone of similar cognitive faculties and abilities fail to be moved as I am? But, if one could show that our calloused interlocutor, even by their own standards of reasoning, is exhibiting a deliberative defect, then, it is supposed, that it is no far stretch to assume that we may be in touch with something which they are not (i.e. reasons, moral entities, moral truths, etc). We intuit that the existence of similarly constituted beings with radically different takes on moral issues, and who are unmoved by considerations of reasons, indicates a problem for our position (though I am not quite sure what to make of this intuition).[87] I suggest that charging them with irrationality or inconsistency may be a way of lessening the significance of their disagreement, especially insofar as it allows us to overcome the objection that we are overestimating our own ability to reason.

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[86] Scanlon argues that a strength of Kantian ethics lies in the fact that, if one could pull off grounding ethics in rationality, then one would have a foothold in arguing with the morally obstinate. A charge of irrationality or inconsistency is more effective than stomping one's feet, and repeating "but you are violating your reasons!" (Scanlon, T.M. *Being Realistic About Reasons,* 12-14).

[87] We might articulate this intuition as an instance of, or at least a corollary of, the problem of disagreements among peers. That is, we may worry that those we take to be morally insensitive "see" something which we do not, but which, if we were aware of, would make us similarly insensitive. For an overview of this problem, see: (Kelly, Thomas. "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement.")

Second, one can be thrown into reflective disequilibrium upon considering their reasons to be moral from multiple vantage points. The demands of morality, or acts which we take ourselves to have normative reasons to perform, may sometimes conflict with what we perceive to be in our best interests. This may lead us to wonder why we should give precedence to the moral point of view rather than to self interest. By reconciling these deliberative points of view, the negative approach can, I hope, reveal to us that this conflict is illusory, or at least much less troublesome than we previously thought.

Without dwelling on the negative approach for too long, consider the arguments put forward by Korsgaard and Nagel. Korsgaard argues that, even from a purely self-interested point of view, there are no convincing or persuasive considerations which count in favor of being a moral wanton. For if one forsook the moral ends and principles which guide us--if one went against what one very strongly suspects that one has reason to do--one would also be deprived of many social goods.[88] Further, one may violate an unavoidable and personally important conception of one's own identity--a conception of oneself which one feels be worth dying for.[89] Similarly, Nagel argues that being able to consider oneself as inherently worthy or intrinsically valuable necessarily commits one to deliberation from an external point of view under which every agent's interests have equal weight, since the concept of inherent worth involves others as being obligated to view one's own interests as equally weighted with theirs.[90] While these arguments do not, it seems to me, fully answer the normative question, they are capable of reducing reflective disequilibrium in the ways described above, and that surely moves us towards significant consolation.

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[88] (Korsgaard, Christine. *The Sources of Normativity,* 59-60)
[89] (Korsgaard, Christine. *The Sources of Normativity,* 58)
[90] "I believe that the crucial question he has to answer is whether he is prepared to regard that individual, reflectively considered, as worthless...Egoism as a general principle is equivalent to regarding myself as valueless from a reflective point of view, because it says that my interests, like those of every other person, provide others with no reason for action except in so far as they can be linked to the other person's prior motives" (Nagel, Thomas. "Universality and the Reflective Self," 207.).

(V.2.3) The Positive Consolation of Revelatory Religion

As for the positive consolation which revelatory, theistic religion might offer, I can say much

less, and must first qualify my suggestion. I do not mean to lay the foundations for a moral

argument for theism or any other religious claims. For, as should be obvious by now, I have

taken doubts about moral authority, normativity, reasons and truths very seriously. To argue to a

metaphysical claim (i.e. "God, the source of goodness, exists") on the basis of moral claims first

requires those moral claims to be justified.[91] Since we have just spent a great deal of space

laying out doubts about our intuitive moral systems, and so providing ammunition for the moral

skeptic, we cannot simply try to console ourselves by postulating the existence of God and

taking Him to serve as the source of goodness, normativity, reasons, etc. This would, it seems

to me, increase reflective disequilibrium by overlooking or violating the concerns of our internal

skeptic. So, we cannot warrant a consoling, theistic metaphysic/metaethic *on the basis of* our

moral convictions, feelings or beliefs, since these convictions are themselves the subjects of

doubt, and this is not at all what I am about to suggest.[92]

   Rather, the consoling power of revelatory theistic religions I have in mind stems from the

possibility that justified belief in the core doctrines of these religions can provide indirect

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[91] Foot and Korsgaard both note something similar to the point I am making here. Korsgaard writes, "The difficulty here is plain. The metaphysical view that intrinsically normative entities or properties exist must be *supported by* our confidence that we really do have obligations. It is because we are confident that obligation is real that we are prepared to believe in the existence of some sort of objective values. But for that very reason the appeal to the existence of objective values cannot be used to support our confidence" (Korsgaard, Christine. *The Sources of Normativity,* 40.). And Foot writes, "Just as one may feel as if one is falling without believing that one is moving downward, so one may feel as if one has to do what is morally required without believing oneself to be under physical or psychological compulsion, or about to incur a penalty if one does not comply...There is no difficulty about the idea that we feel we *have* to behave morally, and given the psychological conditions of the learning of moral behavior it is natural that we should have such feelings. What we cannot do is quote them in support of the doctrine of the categorical imperative" (Foot, Phillipa. "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives.").
[92] This applies equally to theoretical moral arguments, which attempt to evidence, say, theism on the basis of moral truths, and to practical moral arguments, like Kant's, which attempt to show that one has (practical) reason to believe in God in order to preserve something like moral motivation. For an overview of Kant's various arguments, see: (Pasternack, Lawrence. *Kant on Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason.*). For one of the most popular instances of theoretical moral arguments, see: (Craig, William. "The Most Gruesome of Guests." In *Is Goodness Without God Good Enough?*).

epistemic access to a consoling metaethic. (In what follows, I restrict myself to talk of

Christianity, as it is the religion I am most familiar with, while recognizing that Judaism and Isalm

may be equally consoling.) For instance, *if* one could establish the truth of Christ's teachings,

and *if* one included in these teachings explicit affirmations of intrinsic value, then it seems to me

that one would have some degree of warrant for belief in external, non-instrumental reasons or

sources of normativity. The divinity and resurrection of Christ in particular help us to see the

point: if, as historical Christianity supposes, Christ is God incarnate, and if His teachings were

vindicated by resurrection, then, in affirming that some beings (namely humans) have intrinsic

value, it seems that Christ also affirms, to some extent, the accuracy of our moral conceptual

system. Though Christ is never on record having entered into a discourse regarding the *nature*

of intrinsic value or moral truths, He does, without qualification, endorse the value of creation

and humanity:

> *Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?[93]*
>
> *Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.[94]*

To describe my hopeful suggestion freely, God, the foundation and base-level of reality,

condescends to humanity, taking on human faculties, including moral faculties of the same sort

which produce our angst and moral concepts, and *affirms* that certain beings are intrinsically

valuable or worthy of love and care. Barring divine deception, we have two plausible

possibilities. First, our other conceptual commitments laid out above are correct, and

value/worth of this sort require the existence of external reasons or sources of normativity, in

which case, barring divine deception, we have reason to suspect that these entities, whatever

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[93] Matthew 6:25-27 (NKJV)
[94] Matthew 10:29-30 (NKJV)

they are, exist. This moves us towards the first means of significant consolation described above. Second, our conceptual commitments are incorrect, and intrinsic value/worth does not, for instance, require external reasons or sources, but in such a way that we can stil meaningfully make claims about intrinsic value or moral worth, getting us closer to the second sort of significant consolation described above.

Finally, theism might provide the metaethicist with a helpful account of moral knowledge. This explanation might overcome the difficulties raised by some variants of evolutionary debunking arguments against moral realism. If God, in His wisdom and beneficence, has arranged for an evolutionary process, with the intention of producing in us moral beliefs and concepts which align with moral entities, normative reasons, etc, then it is not difficult to see how we might explain the harmony of moral reasons and properties on that which benefits us. That is, the existence of God could aid in explaining the harmony of morality with not just self-interest, but on that which has been evolutionarily advantageous. An inability to explain this harmony as anything more than a lucky coincidence has been assumed to be a major weakness of moral realism, and theism may be able to provide us with the start of a hopeful response (although I do not think it is the *only* response one can give to this sort of argument).[95]

Further, a theistic account does not seem to make human moral knowledge dependent on direct epistemic or causal contact with moral entities (namely, reasons). Rather, humans may, again, through the wisdom and goodness of God, be inheritors of a reliable moral system arising out of an evolutionary process, but which has not been caused by direct interaction with

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[95] The variant this addresses on this front is attributed by Wielenberg to Street. The argument suggests that, if moral truths describe external realities (i.e. external reasons or reason giving entities), then, since the evolutionary history of humanity causes us to have moral beliefs insofar as they are evolutionarily advantageous, and not because of the existence of what moral truths describe, then the reasons why we hold moral beliefs are not because of moral reality, but because of these "distorting" influences. This, in turn, is supposed to undermine the justification of moral beliefs *on realism*, since it seems a great and lucky coincidence that our moral beliefs track external, moral entities (Wielenberg, Eric. *Robust Ethics,* 153). Justin Horn seems to echo this sort of evolutionary debunking argument, saying that "the challenge for the realist is to provide some defensible account of the relationship between the putative stance-independent moral truths and evolutionary pressures that have shaped our moral judgements" (Horn, Justin. p116).

moral entities (just as a map, because it is designed by a mapmaker, may accurately represent a street without the features of the map being caused to represent by the characteristics of that street).[96]

Justified belief in divine revelation and its moral teachings may even act as a corrective to the evolutionary influences on the content of our moral beliefs and patterns of moral reasoning, which would allow for the externalist/moral realist to admit that unreliable (non-truth-tracking) evolutionary processes have shaped our moral beliefs, while still admitting that there is a process of deliberation or reflection allowing us to discover and correct these evolutionary errors, perhaps by including the teachings of divine revelation as among the data which reflection seeks to balance.[97]

Of course, the contributions which religion can make towards consoling us in our absurd angst will depend on whether or not we can adequately justify religious belief, and this is not the sort of essay which can afford to enter into that discussion. For one cannot embrace religious beliefs just for the sake of consolation without sacrificing other aspects of themselves (i.e. their inner skeptic), thereby inviting reflective disequilibrium. However, my remarks on the positive

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[96] I borrow this analogy from Eleonore Stump, who shows that theists as far back as Aquinas have made use of reliabilist considerations in epistemology (Stump, Eleonore. *Aquinas,* 252). This may serve as the start of a response to the arguments attributed to Harman and Joyce by Wielenberg. Roughly, these arguments both assert that, if the truth of *P* is not a cause of our belief that *P,* then *P* is unjustified (though both, per Wielenberg, hold to this principle for distinct reasons). Since the evolutionary history of our moral beliefs shows that the truth of *P* is not a cause of our moral beliefs, we then have reason to suspect that our moral beliefs are unjustified (Wielenberg, Eric. *Robust Ethics,* 146-148, 156-159). What sort of explanatory/causal role the truth of a belief *P* must play in the formation of that belief in order for justification is not clear to me, however.

[97] As Guy Kahane notes, EDAs are epistemic arguments which conclude that our moral beliefs are unjustified (or unjustified on moral realism). In order for these arguments to justifiably conclude that moral beliefs are unjustified given the distorting influence of evolutionary processes, it is not enough to show that these processes (a) shape our moral beliefs and (b) are unreliable/not truth-tracking. Rather, one also has to show that (c) there are no other reliable processes of belief-formation which may correct these unreliable evolutionary processes. That is, the proponent of EDA has to show that there is no reliable way for us to correct or calibrate our moral beliefs. (Kahane, 106-107.) Perhaps including divine revelation as an element in reflective equilibrium can be a means of correcting these evolutionarily distorted beliefs. For one would have to make their moral beliefs cohere not just with their own intuitions, but with the teachings of divine revelation, with a recognition of evolutionary distortion, and with all other data available. It is only because Kahane finds theism improbable that this solution is not available to him (Kahane, 109).

consolations of religion may reveal an important function of religious belief: *theoretical* moral

consolation. Many have already supposed that religious belief has the power to console in a few

ways: by reassuring us that we will have a happy life eternally, that the record of our lives is

impossible to erase from the mind of God, that we are loved and have significance in the eyes

of extramental reality, that we have a proper function, and that all things will be made right in the

end. Surely, these are the sort of consoling considerations which brought Tolstoy and many

others a measure of peace upon sincere conversion.[98] But the supposed ability of religion to

vindicate our strongly held moral beliefs, and to reassure us that our moral systems are, at least

to some extent, endorsed by God Himself, must be listed among the functions of religious belief

(or at least among the functions which some impart to religious belief).

(V.2.4) The Positive Consolation of Internalism

Finally, consider the concept of normative force (which I have referred to as "normative

authority," "the normative force of reasons," "the normativity of reasons," "the normative

weight of reasons," etc.). Through this tedious project I have not found any satisfactory

analysis of the concept of normative force, but at most have suggested that the normativity of

reasons *might* reduce to the notion of external reasons or sources of normativity. I suspect

that much of the angsty problem described here stems from this conceptual fogginess. We

sense that there is something more to moral truths or moral reasons than their motivational

(i.e. internal) force. For when the internalist suggests a (reductive) analysis of the force of

reasons as motivational force, the angsty bristle.

However, we might examine the notion of normative force by attempting to put forward

fitting verification or justification conditions for it (that is, conditions under which propositions

utilizing the concept would be considered to be true or justified). What, then, would lead us to

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[98] As James notes, certain forms of religion provide us with hope of a "life not correlated with death, a
health not liable to illness, a kind of good that will not perish, a good in fact that flies beyond the goods of
nature" (James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* 140).

judge that "we have a normatively forceful, non-instrumental reason to Φ?", or "that "consideration x is sufficient for the normative force of our reason r?" What would satisfy us when we incessantly ask of our ultimate, foundational reasons, "why should I care?" I, for one, can only imagine myself to be totally satisfied in these judgements given an overwhelming apprehension of these reasons or considerations as normatively weighty. That is, the best verification conditions I can think up for "we have a normative, non-instrumental reason to Φ," or "x is a sufficient source of normativity for r" are just these: upon apprehending Φ-ing, or that which p Φ -ing is for the sake of, or x, I would be (a) drawn very strongly to agree that we have reasons to Φ for it's own sake or that x provides me a reason to Φ, and (b) drawn in such a way that I cannot entertain any serious doubts about the judgements in (a). A source of normativity, or the normative force of reasons, seems to me to be that which would prompt us to endorse it in ways (a) and (b).

But isn't this is just a variety of the internalism which we have been resisting through these many pages? For instance the Kantian-internalist analyzes non-instrumental reasons as what reason would endorse as necessary to do independently of how that action (or that for which the action is performed) relates to other ends the agent might have or which reason might dictate. A reason is just what reason dictates as necessary.[99] Korsgaard describes the normative force or authority of these reasons--the weight we put on these judgements which makes violating them sometimes worse than death--as stemming from certain internal states.[100] The potential verification conditions given above seem to align very strongly with this

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[99] "One has a reason to act when rationality finds it 'rationally necessary' to do so. (Korsgaard. "The Normativity of Instrumental Reason," 223.)" "'Reason'" means reflective success" (Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity,* 97.).

[100] For Korsgaard, these counterfactual-internal states are the commitments to certain self-conceptions that rational agents have. Obligation, reasons, and the normativity of certain imperatives arises *for each individual* as a result of the rationality *within each individual* actually being such that it endorses or finds as necessary certain actions, beliefs, and imperatives. "Finally, I believe that the answer must appeal, in a deep way, to our sense of who we are, to our sense of identity. As I have been emphasizing, morality can ask hard things of us, sometimes even that we should be prepared to sacrifice our lives in its name. This places a demanding condition on a successful answer to the normative question: it must show that sometimes doing the wrong thing is as bad or worse than death. And for most human beings on most

sort of internalism: I take it that sufficient sources of normativity or reasons with normative

force would be recommended by reason in such a way that, upon apprehending them, I would

be convinced that this source was indeed sufficient, or that this reason was indeed

normative/backed by normative force (assuming I am free from any sort of rational

distortions). Isn't this just the internalist position?

Not quite: I am not analyzing normative force or sufficient sources of normativity in

terms of internal states. Instead, I'm proposing that the verification/justification conditions for

when a reason is normative are internalist. These are epistemic conditions. I am not

convinced that the nature of normative force, sufficient sources of normativity, etc. can be

analyzed in these internalist terms. Neither am I sure what the nature of normativity is, or

would be, if it existed.

Korsgaard seems to want to make ethics independent of (externalist) metaphysics.

But there are at least two ways to take this: are things like reasons, normative force, and

sufficient sources of normativity metaphysically independent of externalist realities, or is

knowledge of them independent from *knowledge* of these realities? For Korsgaard, both

questions can be answered affirmatively. However, perhaps by adopting an internalist view of

moral justification, we can justify our moral beliefs just by finding what reason very strongly

demands. This sort of justification seems more likely attainable than complex metaphysical

knowledge.

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occasions, the only thing that could be as bad or worse than death is something that for us amounts to death--not being ourselves anymore" (Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity,* 17-18). "To be motivated 'by reason' is normally to be motivated by one's reflective endorsement of incentives and impulses, including affections, which arise in a natural way" (Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity,* 127.). "...the fact that you will an end is a reason for the end. It's not exactly that there has to be a *further reason;* it's just that **you** must take the act of **your own will** to be normative f**or you**. And of course this cannot mean merely that you are *going* to pursue the end. It means that **your** willing the end gives it a normative status **for you**, that **your** willing the end in a sense makes it good" ("The Normativity of Instrumental Reason," 227) [emphasis mine]. "The answer in the case of the instrumental principle is that I make a law *for me*" (Ibid, 228).

So, perhaps we should consider this aspect of internalism to provide another possible avenue to positive consolation: we may be able to identify our normative, non-instrumental reasons or sufficient sources of normativity (and so verify the truth of certain normative propositions) by studying reason and what it presents to us as necessary, even if we cannot identify which sorts of metaphysical realities might ground or correspond to these judgements about reasons, sources of normativity, normative properties, etc. This is not an internalist account of reasons (an internalist metaphysic or analysis of the concept), but an internalist epistemology. Internalists define reasons in light of reason. The arguments concerning object-given reasons perturb me too much to adopt an internalist account; I cannot help but be drawn to viewing reason in light of reasons and other normative properties of external objects. Further we may consider reason to have an isomorphism to reasons or that which grounds reasons--that which reason dictates as necessary may indeed match up to that which is truly necessary (normatively forceful), but I am not prepared to say that the latter collapses into the former.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE NOTION OF A MORAL PARADIGM

I have, from the beginning of this essay, referred to the notion of a moral 'conceptual scheme,' and have sought to describe the cause of absurd angst as a problem arising out of reflection on these schemes. By moral conceptual scheme, I mean something like a Khunian paradigm: a way of conceiving of some aspect of experience or thought, which is in some sense a unified structure functioning like a "map" or "schematic." This unified, structured system is not only constructed or derived or evidenced, but, once adopted, is used to derive or evidence further beliefs, and one who holds this conceptual map in their head may discover (what they supposed to be) further, extra-paradigmatic truths just by investigating the structure or content of this schematic.[101]

The moral conceptual scheme I have described pictures moral attributes and claims to be organized in a hierarchy (Chapter I.1). On this scheme, the prolific number of instrumentally valuable ends (including activities and objects) terminates in a set of ultimate, non-instrumental ends, and the conceptual structures of reasons and obligations involve parallel (isomorphic)

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[101] For an exploration of scientific paradigms, their use, and how they shift, see: (Kuhn, Thomas. *The Copernican Revolution.*)

hierarchies. Those like Tolstoy and Camus, after they perceive this conceptual structure, begin to inquire into the nature of those final, ultimate ends, reasons or duties; theoretical difficulties open them up to doubt the existence of such ends or reasons. Here, I have focused purely on difficulties surrounding talk of ultimate or final reasons and their normativity: while we seem to comfortably talk about instrumental reasons, how and why one has a reason to do something for its own sake is less clear. That is, one realizes that the notion of an ultimate or non-instrumental reason is far from clear, and, trying to get clear on this, one discovers that the solutions widely given are not adequate. At least, one discovers that these solutions (namely, internalist accounts of ultimate reasons or sources of the normativity of reasons) do not *feel* adequate. By then turning to reflect on that feeling of inadequacy, one comes to recognize that the 'picture' one had of morality painted normative reasons and sources of normativity as, in some very significant way, motivationally independent (or independent of internal states like motivational states) (Chapters II-III). Further reflection reveals that this 'picture' of morality also demands of any normative truths that they be backed by reasons and thus sources of normativity. But without any alternative to an internalist account of reasons, one begins to get angsty about moral truths and beliefs--one's whole scheme for deliberating, for consoling oneself, and for understanding oneself as living a meaningful or valuable life, is threatened (Chapter IV). This angst I called "absurd angst."

Despite the variety of ethical theories plaguing the history of philosophy, the conceptual structure of the angsty moral paradigm (besides, of course, its externalizing tendencies) seems to me to be widely spread across all but nihilistic accounts (this claim is not essential to this project, so I need not defend it here). Details on what has value, and to what degree, and also as to the general principles which ought to guide us, are disputed and vary widely. But the notion of a hierarchy of ends, terminating in ends which are valuable, worthy, desirable, or reasonable seems to permeate the majority of pre-metaethical views. So, too, are parallel, hierarchical structures of value, reasons, and duties. The questions the angsty raise, and which

I have described at length here, are just these: '*under the conceptual structure of our moral paradigm, are merely internal reasons or merely internal sources of normativity satisfactory?*' '*Should a denial of external reasons and sources of normativity move us towards throwing away this moral paradigm, or can internalism be made to cohere with that structure?*' Assuming that moral authority and normative force are central, non-negotiable aspects of this moral conceptual scheme, one way of reformulating these worries is as follows: '*does the absence of external reasons and sources threaten our moral paradigm by ruling out the normative authority or force of reasons?*'

The position I have argued for here is not, then, an endorsement of externalism, nor an affirmation that there exist external reasons and sources (whatever these would amount to). Rather, it is that the moral conceptual scheme, taken to include (as an essential element) strong normative authority and force, is incompatible with internalism about reasons and sources. The painful angst produced are the pains of an involuntary paradigm shift--the moral paradigm which has made sense of so much, the angsty feel, is crumbling away before their feet, as they come to recognize the theoretical difficulties regarding normative authority and force (that is, as they begin to ask the normative question). The theoretical simplicity and explanatory power of internalist accounts of reasons and sources is felt to threaten this framework, because, while internalism seems to be a viable account of moral meaning, motivational force, and knowledge, its ability to explain the nature of motivation-independent normative force is doubtful.

On my view, internalist accounts have such a difficulty (from the point of view of the angsty) because the moral paradigm of the angsty includes, as an essential or central aspect, a robust, nearly supernatural view of normative force. This robust view requires, so the angsty think, that normative force must be independent of the internal states of rational agents like us, be they actual or only ideal (Chapter I.2.2). This externalism may not be a feature primary to the moral conceptual scheme of the angsty, but something 'read off from' its other features which constitute the 'robust sense' of normative force. I proposed several essential features of this

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robust view of normative force that, when taken together, indicate the centrality of externalism. First, the moral paradigm of the angsty paints normative truths about reasons and their authority as capable of obligating those who do not have any pro-moral, internal states (Chapter II.2). Second, reasons and normative force are seen as stemming from the intrinsic properties of objects (Chapters II.3, III.2). Third, the sources of normativity, on this moral paradigm, are supposed to be capable of conferring a degree of normative force (import) on reasons which goes far beyond the force (import) of that conferrable by human preferences, given that human preferences can be, and often are, base (Chapter III.3). Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, the paradigm of the angsty assigns an important function to moral/normative truths: the ability to console. However, a denial of some form of externalism would strip consolation from the angsty by committing them to recognize a host of unpalatable features of the world, thereby undermining the picture of moral/normative truth which the angsty has adopted (Chapter IV). These features of the moral paradigm taken together (far-reaching authority, object-given nature of reasons and sources, the great import or weight of normative force, and the consoling nature of morality) indicate, to the angsty, that externalism is necessary in order to preserve such a view of morality. However, the theoretical problems regarding externalism weigh heavily on the mind, and angst sets in.

Having described all this in as much detail as I am capable, I surveyed a possible but unsatisfactory solution to absurd angst (Chapter V.1). This suggested remedy can now, by invoking the notion of paradigm, be understood more fully: the suggestion that we ought to reshape our desires so as to be more amenable to internalism involves a painful paradigm shift, not merely a reshaping of desires. This is met with hostility by the angsty because we cling tightly to what we feel is the non-negotiable, conceptual structure of normative thought (whether we are correct in this, I do not know). The sort of consolation I earlier called "significant" is, then, a hope on the part of the angsty that there will be some way to preserve this strongly ingrained conceptual scheme without violating theoretical standards (Chapter V.1.4). The path to

consolation I have suggested can similarly be understood: internalist arguments can help justify us in continuing to hold this angsty moral paradigm, particularly by showing us that the nature of rationality, even the nature of merely self-interested deliberation, commits us to key components of this conceptual structure (Chapter V.2.2). Arguments supporting the truth of certain revelatory religions indirectly warrant the preservation of this paradigm, so long as these religions are committed to that paradigm (Chapter V.2.3). Finally, internalist thinking may offer us promising accounts of how to verify what counts as a normatively forceful, whether we have ultimate or non-instrumental reasons, or what we should consider to be sufficient sources of normativity, thereby removing some of the epistemic threats to our moral paradigm, allowing us to preserve it, at least for a little longer, without adopting internalist metaphysical accounts (Chapter V.2.4). But whether these solutions, or this paradigm, ought to continue to be adopted, is ultimately beyond the scope of this essay, and I am not very hopeful that human reason can settle the issue with anything approaching satisfactory confidence, as I can see no potential way to confirm the existence of whatever 'external reasons' and 'sources' amount to.

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