POLISH JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY
Vol. III, No. 2 (Fall 2009), 87-107.

Desire-Based Reasons, Naturalism, and the Possibility of Vindication: Lessons from Moore and Parfit*

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Abstract. The aim of the paper is to critically assess the idea that reasons for action are provided by desires (the Model). I start from the claim that the most often employed meta-ethical background for the Model is ethical naturalism; I then argue against the Model through its naturalist background. For the latter purpose I make use of two objections that are both intended to refute naturalism *per se*. One is G. E. Moore's Open Question Argument (OQA), the other is Derek Parfit's Triviality Objection (TO). I show that naturalists might be able to avoid both objections if they can vindicate the reduction proposed. This, however, leads to further conditions whose fulfillment is necessary for the success of the vindication. I deal with one such condition, which I borrow from Peter Railton and Mark Schroeder: the demand that naturalist reductions must be tolerably revisionist. In the remainder of the paper I argue that the most influential versions of the Model are intolerably revisionist. The first problem concerns the picture of reasons that many recent formulations of the Model advocate. By using an objection from Michael Bedke, I show that on this interpretation obvious reasons won't be accounted for by the Model. The second problem concerns the idealization that is also often part of the Model. Invoking an argument of Connie Rosati's, I show that the best form of idealization, the ideal advisor account, is inadequate. Hence, though not the knock down arguments they were intended to be, OQA and TO do pose a serious threat to the Model.

* I thank first and foremost my colleagues in Stockholm for their comments and suggestions. I also thank the examiners of my doctoral thesis in Budapest: János Kis, Ferenc Huoranszki and Krister Bykvist. The paper has also benefited from comments in workshops and conferences in Budapest, Oslo, and Lisbon. Research on the paper was funded by a Guest Scholarship from the Swedish Institute as well as by a Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Swedish Research Council (Grant number: 435-2007-7830).

1. Naturalism and the Model

In the theory of normative reasons one popular approach is the Desire-Based Reasons Model (henceforth: the Model). The Model typically comes with an ethical naturalist (henceforth: naturalist) background. Not everyone rushes to endorse naturalism, however. The most influential argument launched against it is G. E. Moore's Open Question Argument (OQA). However, recently Derek Parfit has joined Moore in rejecting naturalism by employing a knock-down argument, the Triviality Objection (TO), as I will call it. My aim in this paper is to investigate to what extent these objections can be used to reject the Model. To this end, we first need a suitable account of what naturalism is, and in this context we then have to locate the Model; after this we can turn to the objections mentioned.

In this paper I am concerned with what is often called substantive naturalism (Railton, 1990, p. 155; 1993b, p. 315). On this view naturalism is understood as proposing an account of normative properties in terms of *natural* properties or relations.[1] Substantive naturalism involves three approaches: analytical naturalism, non-analytical naturalism, and what Jonathan Dancy dubs one-term naturalism (Dancy, 2005, p. 126). Analytical naturalism holds that normative properties are natural properties and the two, normative and descriptive, ways of capturing them are synonymous (Jackson, 1998, Chap. 5-6; Smith, 1994, Chap. 2). In contrast with analytical naturalism, in non-analytical naturalism concepts and properties come apart: though to each normative term there is a corresponding descriptive term and these terms refer to identical properties, the two terms are not synonymous. Although normative properties are reducible to natural properties, the identity statements employed are synthetic, not analytical (Railton, 1997; 2003; Miller, 1979; 1985; Brink, 1989, Chap. 6).

Finally, there is the position of one-term naturalism (Sturgeon, 1985ab; 1986ab; 2005; Boyd, 1988). Like non-analytical naturalism, this view only makes claims about property identity, but unlike non-analytical naturalism, it does not claim that there is a descriptive way of capturing normative properties. It is in this respect non-reductive: normative terms may not have corresponding descriptive terms, even though the properties they refer to are identical. That is, even though we may know that normative properties are natural properties, we may not be able to tell *which* properties they are.

Recently, in explaining the motivation behind the position, Nicholas Sturgeon has argued that it is extravagant to assume that we have

[1] Here I set aside the difficulties surrounding the notion of natural property. Instead, I will act on the supposition that such an account can be given. For a good overview of different definitions and the difficulties they face see Copp (2003) and Ridge (2003).

descriptive terms for all natural properties (Sturgeon, 2005, pp. 98-99). The paradigm examples of natural properties are those science deals with, and even in their case, due to the terminological innovation that is a standard feature of scientific progress, new terms are introduced for properties not previously recognized, and there is no reason to think that this process is ever going to end. Hence, there is no assurance that if some normative term stands for a natural property, we can (in fact, will ever be able to) find a suitable descriptive term to represent that property. Nevertheless, since there is good reason to suppose – contrary to critics – that normative properties play a causal role, there is good reason to think that they are natural properties. In fact, the role these properties play in the causal network may help us say something about them without giving an explicit reduction in descriptive terms.

With these distinctions in mind, let us now see how naturalists interpret the Model. Since there are several versions, in the paper I will deal with the two most influential and/or recent versions. Mark Schroeder defines the Model, which he calls Hypotheticalism, in the following way:

> For *R* to be a reason for *X* to do *A* is for there to be some *p* such that *X* has a desire whose object is *p*, and the truth of *R* is part of what explains why *X's* doing *A* promotes *p*. (Schroeder, 2007, p. 193)

The idea is this. Take Schroeder's example (2007, p. 29, note 19). If Ronnie (*X*) likes dancing (*p*), then the fact that there will be dancing at the party (*R*) helps explain why Ronnie's going to the party (*A*) would promote Ronnie's desire to dance. 'Explanation' here is meant in the metaphysical sense: explanations are facts about "what is true because of what" (Schroeder, 2007, note 19). Hence this particular feature of Ronnie's situation becomes a reason for Ronnie. In short, the Model designates two properties; one normative (the relational property of being a reason for), the other natural (as it appears in the part of Schroeder's formula that contains reference to the promotion of the agent's desire), and claims that these properties are identical, and the terms used to capture the properties may or may not be synonymous (Schroeder himself is a non-analytical naturalist).

However, many think that this reading of the Model is too crude insofar as it admits just any desire of the agent as reason-providing. Advocates of the Model often deny this. Since some of the agent's desires may be crazy, compulsive or inconsiderate, there should be a way of selecting among them. One way to do this is through idealization: by appealing to counterfactual conditions that make up what we may call condition *C*. The most concise definition comes from someone who is not himself an advocate of the Model: Jonathan Dancy. I use a modified formula of his, below I explain why. It goes like this:

> If its being the case that *p* is a good reason for *A* to *φ*, *this is because* there is some *e* such that in condition *C A* would desire *e* and, given that *p*, *φ-ing* subserves the prospect of *e*'s being realized (or continuing to be realized). (Dancy, 2000, p. 28)

In its structure this definition is similar to Schroeder's. Reasons for action (*p*) are features of the agent (*A*)'s situation, and what turns them into reasons, i.e., what endows them with the status of being a reason is that the agent in condition *C* would have a desire (*e*) that her action (*φ*) subserves given that the relevant feature of the agent's situation obtains (Schroeder would say that this fact helps explain why the agent's action promotes her desire). That is, we have two properties just as in Schroeder's case, one natural, the other normative, and the definition reduces the latter to the former.

The idealized approach appeals to hypothetical desires, but it is important to emphasize that for it to be a version of the Model it must also hold that only actual desires of the agent can ground reasons for him. This can happen in two ways. First, Dancy argues that the role of condition *C* is to show us which of our *actual* desires would be *retained* under suitably idealized conditions. Other non-actual desires that also pass the test of condition *C* cannot ground reasons for the agent. Hence Dancy's formula would read "there is some *e* such that *A* actually desires *e* and in condition *C A* would desire *e*" (cf. Dancy, 2000, p. 28). The reason why I did not use this formulation is because there is a second way to understand dependence on actual desires. Following Bernard Williams we can claim that desires in condition *C* are desires generated by correct deliberation that is controlled by the agent's actual desires (Williams, 1981; also Smith, 1994, p. 165; Goldman, 2006, p. 472). Hence desires in condition *C* are still a function of the agent's actual desires, even though the agent might not actually have them. As a result, we get just the sort of relativity to actual desires that the Model needs.

Turn now to the features of condition *C*. As there are many ways to interpret these features, there are several theories available in the literature. Some of these don't deal with reasons but with goodness; nevertheless, since my argument is not *ad hominem* in this paper, I take them to be offering variations on the same theme. What is more important is that there is no need to consider all the possible interpretations. There appears to be a consensus in the literature that one type of theory, the so-called *ideal advisor model* offers the best available account of the idealized version of the Model.[2] The view characterizes condition *C* as one in which an

[2] For the decisive (to my mind) objections to other versions of the idealized account of the Model see Gibbard (1990, p. 20), Hubin (1996, pp. 36-43), Loeb (1995, pp. 9-11), Velleman (1988) on Richard Brandt's theory of value (as it appears in Brandt

idealized self (the advisor) tells his non-idealized self (the actual agent) what she would want for her to want were she to find herself in the actual condition and circumstances of hers.

The question is how we describe the idealized self. The two most influential formulations come from Peter Railton and Michael Smith. Railton understands the ideal advisor as someone "who is fully and vividly informed about himself and his circumstances, and entirely free of cognitive error and lapses of instrumental rationality" (Railton, 2003, p. 54). Smith, joined recently by Alan Goldman, agrees but adds that the ideal advisor must also have a maximally coherent and unified desire set (Smith, 1994, pp.151-152; 1997, pp. 301-302; Goldman, 2006, p. 472).[3] Although the epistemic and cognitive features of the advisor can be further elaborated, for our purposes this much should suffice.

2. Two objections, one response

We now have a clear view of the Model and its connection to a naturalist meta-ethics. It is time to consider the objections. There are two: one is derived from G. E. Moore's classical argument, the other, more recent, comes from Derek Parfit. Both aim to refute naturalism as such and both, I believe, fail. Yet their failure is instructive in spelling further trouble for the naturalist Model. I will take up each objection in turn.

G. E. Moore's Open Question Argument (OQA) has a long history; it has been taken up and interpreted by many (Moore, 1903, pp. 10-21; Ayer, 1936, pp.103-106; Brink, 1989, pp. 152-153, 162-163; Sturgeon, 2005, pp. 95-96). Famously, Moore has claimed – or, more precisely, has been later interpreted to have claimed—that since for any natural property *F* it is possible to think that *x* has *F* while at the same time thinking that *x* is not right (good, rational etc.), it follows that for no natural property *F* is it self-contradictory to claim that *x* has *F* but *x* is not right (good, rational etc.). But it would have to be self-contradictory if it were possible to give a

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1979), and Smith (1997) on Bernard Williams' theory of reason (as it appears in Williams, 1981; 1995ab; 2001).

[3] Two notes are in order. Smith claims his analysis of reason to be anti-Humean. He argues that if rational deliberation included the systematic justification of desires, this process would lead us to converge on the same desires about a given situation no matter what actual desires we started out from. This means that our reasons would not after all be anchored in our actual desires, which is contrary to what the Model needs. See Smith (1994, pp. 164-174). However, this is a further, substantive argument, which according to many does not follow from Smith's analysis of reasons. Second, Goldman does not explicitly claim to be offering a version of the ideal advisor account, though he does note that his account is close to Smith's. See Goldman (2005, p. 522).

naturalistic definition of rightness (goodness, rationality, reason etc.). Therefore no synonymy can exist between normative and natural terms. OQA employs several controversial theses concerning the nature of analysis, the right form of naturalism and so on, and each of these theses has been questioned and rejected. Although not everyone accepts that OQA is a failed argument, here we can accept that this is so.[4]

Even so, there may be a way to resurrect OQA. Perhaps naturalist critics of Moore are right and a *direct* defeat of naturalism is impossible. But it doesn't automatically follow that an *indirect* defeat would also be unworkable. Peter Railton makes the following point:

> Even if Moore's "open question" argument cannot be deployed directly against an interpretation of discourse about the person's good that does not purport to express analytic truths, a significant critical function may still be served by pressing Moorean questions against such interpretations. For it would be a challenge to any theoretical identification or reforming definition of *P* in terms of *Q* to argue that there is something central to the notion of *P* that does not appear to be captured by *Q*; this would make the question 'I can see that this is *Q*, but is it *P*?' genuinely compelling, not just barely possible. (Railton, 1990, p. 158)

Railton's point appears to be this. Every naturalistic account of normative terms leaves some questions open, i.e., an account of normative concepts is necessarily revisionist to some extent. It gives us a proposal that aims to capture everything about the given term, but there may be some functions of the pre-reductive term, which the proposal cannot account for. This is why open questions occur. From this perspective it does not matter whether the proposal in question offers a conceptual analysis or a synthetic identity statement. They both want to fulfill the task of giving us an account as perfect as possible, and they both fail if they leave us with questions concerning important function(s) of the given term.[5] Although OQA may be a failure, in this indirect way it has a lasting heritage.

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[4] Firth (1952, p. 330); Lewis (1989, pp. 129-130); Smith (1994, p. 38); Jackson (1998, p. 151) give the analytical naturalist answer, Sturgeon (1985a, pp. 25-26); Railton (1990, p. 156); Brink (2001); Copp (2000); Brandt (1979, pp. 14-16, 126-128) give the non-analytical naturalist answer, and Sturgeon (2005) defends one-term naturalism *contra* the OQA. For a recent criticism of the analytical answer see Hatzimoysis (2002, pp. 11-13) and Gampel (1997), while Horgan and Timmons (1991), (1992ab) argue against the non-analytical response.

[5] This claim needs qualification. Since revisionism is a comparative enterprise, we may conclude that we should not discard a particular theory even if it cannot account for an important function. This can happen if, after we have examined all the available attempts, we find none that can account for that particular function and none that are better than the attempt under examination. This is where 'real' revisionism—the position Railton dubs as 'reforming definition' in the cited passage—may come into play: we can declare that if this is so, we should perhaps do without that function, and

Railton calls the corresponding condition *tolerable revisionism* (Railton, 1990, p. 159; 1993a, p. 282; 1993b, p. 316). As said above, tolerable revisionism is a condition on almost all forms of naturalism. The exception is Sturgeon's one-term naturalism. Since his idea is that although normative properties are natural properties, they cannot be captured in descriptive terms, there is no way we can evaluate his reduction. For, strictly speaking, Sturgeon does not propose a reduction. He only argues for the possibility and plausibility of naturalist reductions, but deliberately says nothing about *particular* reductions: he does not tell us which natural property is identical with the given normative property. For lack of such candidates, however, there is nothing more we can say.

In assessing Sturgeon's theory, Dancy says that this is an ingenious position. Indeed, it is an elegant way of avoiding most of the troubles that beset naturalism. At the same time, there is something disconcerting about a meta-ethical position that does not say anything concrete about its own subject matter. For instance, we might try to say that Sturgeon's naturalism offers a good background for the Model. But does it? We don't know. We don't know if this is a reduction Sturgeon accepts, since by his own lights he cannot say anything about the reduction basis of the property of being a reason for. If he does, his naturalism immediately transforms into one of the other forms of naturalism and becomes liable to the requirement of tolerable revisionism.

For this reason I don't think that Sturgeon's version of naturalism would be of much help for the Model. The same feature that makes it a more defensible form of naturalism, namely the non-reductive element it incorporates, makes it unable to serve as a background for the Model. After all, the Model *is* a particular reduction. And as to the other forms of naturalism, I will ultimately claim that the reduction they propose in the form of the Model is intolerably revisionist. But we will come to this later. First I want to show that another knock-down argument against naturalism leads to the same requirement and, *ipso facto*, to the same diagnosis. The Triviality Objection (TO), as we may call it, was resurrected by Derek Parfit, but it too has a history. Parfit himself attributes it to Henry Sidgwick and it seems to play a role in Allan Gibbard's rejection of naturalism (Parfit, 1997, pp. 123-124; Sidgwick, 1907, p. 26n; Gibbard, 1990, p. 33). The most recent, and to my mind the best formulation of the objection comes, however, from Jonathan Dancy. Here is how he puts it:

> Take a standard version of analytic naturalism: the predicates 'is right' and 'minimizes suffering' have the same meaning. Now ask what, if so, could be meant by saying that this act of minimizing suffering is right. All that can be

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reform our present use of the term. See Brandt (1979, Chap. 1) and Rawls (1971, §60-63).

> meant by this – since, according to the analytic naturalist, the predicates 'minimizes suffering' and 'is right' have the same meaning—is that this is an act of minimizing suffering and that, as another way of saying the same thing, we could say that it is right. But this renders the second half of the utterance a merely trivial addition to the first; it is a comparatively insignificant fact that there is another way of saying that this action would minimize suffering. However, we all know perfectly well that the second half of the utterance is not a merely trivial restatement of what the first half said. […] This is all that Parfit initially intends to show; his first target is analytical naturalism. But he then discusses a way of adapting his argument so that it would apply to nonanalytic forms of naturalism. Such naturalisms suppose that even if we do not just repeat ourselves (i.e., say the same thing) when we say that an action with the relevant natural property is right, we are nevertheless reporting the same fact twice in very different language. So, again, what could be meant by saying that this act of minimizing suffering is right? All that can be meant by this since, according to the nonanalytic naturalist, the predicates 'minimizes suffering' and 'is right' ascribe the same property – is that this is an act of minimizing suffering, and that, as another way of reporting the same state of affairs, we could say that it is right. But this, it may seem, renders the second half of the utterance 'this act, which minimizes suffering, is right' a merely trivial addition to the first, and so deprives such utterances of their normative significance. (Dancy, 2005, pp. 131-132)

Again, let me interpret what Dancy says here. On both analytical and non-analytical naturalism we seem to lose the normativity of the ethical. On analytical naturalism, explaining the claim that something ought to be done with reference to the idea that doing it minimizes suffering would be like explaining why a man is married with reference to the fact that he is a bachelor. And on non-analytical naturalism, it will be like explaining why something is gold with reference to the atomic structure exhibited by it (cf. Tännsjö, 2006, pp. 219-220). These aren't real explanations, it seems, since the explanandum simply restates the explanans; or, to put it in the language of reasoning, the agent's conclusion simply restates his premises without adding anything to them. Consequently, we don't really explain anything here; we don't really conclude about anything. But we do think that there is something there to be explained, something to be concluded about, something ethical and normative. Naturalism, however, does not live up to these expectations.

There are several ways to respond to TO. Dancy himself mentions two: Jackson's analytical naturalism and Sturgeon's one-term naturalism. On Sturgeon's view, we only know that ethical facts are natural facts, but we don't know what those facts are: we don't have descriptive terms to capture these facts. Hence the second half of the utterance "this act, which minimizes suffering, is right" is not a trivial, insignificant addition to the first, since we don't, in fact, have in our possession the terms to properly express the first half. All we have are the terms used in the second half,

which are thus crucial and indispensable (cf. Dancy, 2005, p. 132). I, however, have already offered my misgivings about Sturgeon's theory in the given context, i.e., as a background for the Model. Hence while I agree with Dancy as to the ability of one-term naturalism to respond to TO, naturalist advocates of the Model, I submit, should not make use of this idea.

The same goes for Jackson's view. What does the trick in Jackson's case, according to Dancy, is that Jackson's candidates for ethical properties may be vast descriptive properties (Jackson, 1998, p. 124). With such properties, Dancy claims, we cannot say that an act is right *because* it minimizes suffering. All we can say is that an act minimizes suffering *and* it is right (Dancy, 2005, p. 132). It is not clear to me what Dancy has in mind here. Perhaps his claim is connected to Jackson's remark that ethical terms are indispensable because, due to the vastness of the proposed descriptive property, we need them to handle the description the ethical is identical with (Jackson, 1998, p. 124). Be that as it may, even if Dancy (and Jackson) are right, this is still not a problem. For the Model—think of Schroeder's formula—need not use a Jackson-type vast descriptive property in its account of the property of being a reason for, hence its defenders cannot invoke Jackson's view at this point.

A third option would be to turn to the idea that although normative facts are not reducible to natural facts, they are nothing over and above such facts. Many advocate this idea – often put as the distinction between identity and constitution—on the ground that normative properties can be realized in multiple ways (e.g. Brink, 1989, Chap. 6). And it seems that if the idea is defensible, naturalists can find a way to get around TO. For this form of naturalism has a non-reductive element on the level of properties; hence the claim on which TO rests, that reduction trivializes the ethical and therefore eliminates its normativity, is no longer valid. Of course, as with every meta-ethical theory, here too there are doubts. It is questionable, for instance, whether this non-reductive kind of naturalism does not eventually collapse into one of its reductionist rivals. And there are other serious problems regarding its account of properties as well as the wider metaphysical picture it rests on (McNaughton, & Rawling, 2003; Johansson, 2009). But I do not want to investigate this view here; doing so would take us too deeply into metaphysics, something that goes beyond the scope of this paper. It is moreover an issue I have investigated elsewhere (Tanyi, 2006).

There is, however, a fourth response that is available to naturalist advocates of the Model. TO claims that naturalist reductions trivialize the ethical, thereby depriving it of normativity, because it is insignificant, and thus uninteresting, that some property is identical with another or that some terms are synonymous: everything is already there in the descriptive story,

our learning its connection to the ethical adds nothing to this. This, however, is not obviously so. Start with the claim that reductions can provide us with information about what is reduced. How? There are at least three options. Firstly, analytical naturalists often point out that by using conceptual analysis we can get a clearer view of concepts we are otherwise familiar with. This is because many facts about these concepts are hidden in the unobvious, opaque conceptual relations of what Jackson calls 'mature folk morality': the morality that we end up with after debate and critical reflection (Jackson, 1998, p. 151). Therefore, when we learn that two terms pick out the same property, this might indeed be informative.

Secondly, non-analytical naturalists point out that reductions provide us with crucial information about the reduced notion by placing it in the world in an unproblematic way: by showing that it in fact picks out a natural property (Railton, 1993b, p. 318). Take the reduction of water to H_2O. In knowing that water is water, what we knew was that water is the colorless liquid that flows in rivers, falls from clouds as rain, etc. But in coming to know that water is H_2O, we were told that water is a substance whose molecules consist of two hydrogen atoms bonded to one oxygen atom. This is an important piece of information that explains why water, i.e., the colorless liquid exists and takes the form it does. Hence, though the facts reported are the same, it is important that they can be reported in some other way.

Thirdly and finally, reduction can be informative by giving us an account of the structure of ethical properties (Schroeder, 2007, pp. 65-66). For instance, in the case of the Model, we learn that the property of being a reason for has a particular structure understood in terms of desire, promotion, explanation, idealization and so on. Although it is controversial to hold that properties are structured entities, we can set this debate aside now.[6]

If reduction can in these three ways be informative, it need not be insignificant that descriptive and ethical terms are synonymous, or that descriptive and ethical properties are identical. But this is not enough. For the information produced by the reduction can also be *eliminative*. Examples are numerous: phlogiston, caloric fluid, vital force, polywater, the non-divine reduction of the sacred are all cases at hand. This then leads to the following requirement. The naturalist has to show that normative properties, though reduced to the natural and capable of being captured in descriptive terms, are nevertheless genuine properties with an independent role to play in human practice and discourse. Peter Railton calls this project *vindicatory reductionism*. He puts the idea in the following way: "[..] the naturalist who would vindicate the cognitive status of value judgments is

[6] For a discussion and defense see Schroeder (2007, pp. 67-72).

not required to deny the possibility of reduction, for some reductions are vindications – they provide us with reason to think the reduced phenomena are genuine" (Railton, 1990, p. 161). And, at another place, he says: "Some reductions explain away the reduced phenomenon, but others simply explain it – and thereby show it to be well-founded" (Railton, 1993b, p. 317).

Now the question is what makes a reduction vindicative and not eliminative. There may be several conditions, but there is certainly one *minimal* condition that every reduction must fulfill in order to be vindicative: it must reproduce all the vital but 'old' information we associate with the given term (Railton, 1990, p. 159; Schroeder, 2007, pp. 75-76).[7] Since I believe that the Model will fail even this minimal requirement, I see no reason to demand more at this point. But if this is so, our response to the indirect OQA, and our response to TO join paths. For this requirement, i.e. that vindicative reduction reproduce all the vital but old information we associate with the given term, is exactly the condition of tolerable revisionism. Hence our task for the rest of the paper: to see if there is an important function the Model leaves out.

3. First problem: reasons and the Model

I believe there is one such function: the inherent recommending force of our reason-claims. When we ask questions about a naturalist account of reasons, goodness, rightness etc., what we are often driving at is the recommending force of the given account. We ask the question "But is it really good for me?" or "But is it really a reason?" because we doubt that we should do, approve of, or recommend whatever has the naturalistic property identified with goodness, reason or rightness. In other words, a successful reductionist account of reasons must get the right results about all the things that are true about reasons (Schroeder, 2007, p. 82). It must not allow for too many reasons, or for too few. In this regard, I shall argue, the two versions of the Model that I have presented in the first section both fail.

The first problem concerns those forms of the Model that understand normative reasons as aspects of the agent's situation. Schroeder's Hypotethicalism is a case at hand. Recall his definition: it uses aspects of the agent's situation, such as the fact that there will be dancing at the party, as the reasons for the agent. That is, contrary to what is often claimed, it is

[7] As to the other conditions, Schroeder discusses the problem of propagating implications, whereas Railton invokes the condition of practical justification. See Schroeder (2007, pp. 76-82); Railton (1990, p. 173) and Railton (1993b, p. 324).

not desires themselves that serve as reasons. Schroeder is not alone with this thought. Dancy's definition of the idealized version of the Model, recall, also interprets the Model in this way (Dancy, 2000, p. 28), and Alan Goldman advocates the same view in his own version of the Model, which he calls Strong Internalism (Goldman, 2005, p. 508; 2006, p. 472)

It is important to see that this is not a random element of these views. In fact, Schroeder and Goldman are led to this view by the same considerations. It is best to put this line of thought in the following way. The reasoning starts from an objection to the Model. The Model requires agents to deliberate about their desires, instead of deliberating about the world. However, this not only gives a false picture of deliberation, but is also objectionably self-regarding: agents are required to be moved only by considerations about the satisfaction of their own desires, even when those desires are other-regarding (Schroeder, 2007, p. 27). The stock response to this is to claim that desires are in the background of deliberation: agents deliberate *from* their desires, not *about* those desires (Pettit, & Smith, 1990; Blackburn, 1998, pp. 250-261). However, the objection goes, this cannot be. First, anything that is relevant for the explanation of why some consideration has the status of a reason, must be *part of* that reason. Schroeder calls this the No Background Condition (Schroeder, 2007, p. 23). Second, deliberation is and must be about the agent's reasons. Schroeder calls this the Deliberative Constraint (Schroeder, 2007, p. 26). Since desire is relevant for explanation, it must be part of the reason whose status it explains, hence it must be what the agent deliberates about. Schroeder's and Goldman's corresponding strategy is to accept the Deliberative Constraint, but deny the No Background Condition (Schroeder, 2007, pp. 28-29; Goldman, 2005, pp. 5-9; 2006, p. 472).

They may be right about this; I myself find the Deliberative Constraint plausible, the No Background Condition implausible, and I certainly don't like the idea that reasons are mental states. However, used in this particular context, their strategy creates trouble for them. Here is an objection from Michael Bedke.[8] Take Ronnie's example from the first section. "That there will be dancing at the party" is a reason for him to go the party because he desires to dance. But what is his reason *to dance*? What is the true proposition that would explain why he has reason to dance given that he desires to dance? Bedke claims that, strangely enough, there is no such true proposition.[9]

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[8] Even more recently, another objection was made by Gregory (2009). However, Gregory deals with Schroeder's attempt to account for agent-neutral reasons and this would take us too far into the subtleties of Hypotheticalism and related matters.

[9] This problem should not be confused with a similar issue in the theory of action. There it is claimed that the desire/belief model of action explanation cannot account for intrinsically motivated actions, i.e., actions to φ just because one wants to φ, because

There are two ways to come up with a suitable candidate. One is to claim that Ronnie has some other desire that gives him a reason to dance. Bedke takes the simplest option. Perhaps Ronnie has a second-order desire to satisfy his first-order desires, in which case "that Ronnie desires to dance" might be a reason for Ronnie to dance. But this and any similar proposal is contingent; perhaps Ronnie has no other desire but to dance (Bedke, 2008, p. 3). Alternatively, we can stick to Ronnie's desire to dance and claim that the relevant proposition is "that Ronnie's dancing makes it more likely that Ronnie dances." However, an appeal to this proposition leads us to a localized version of TO. For Schroeder understands a proposition's ability to help explain why acting promotes the agent's desire as the ability to help explain why acting makes it more likely that the action promotes the desire (Schroeder, 2007, p. 113) Hence what we have here is again a case where the explanans simply restates the explanandum, and this is just as much unacceptable here as elsewhere (Bedke, 2008). Finally, there is the proposition "that Ronnie's dancing makes it the case he dances." Here we do not have identity, but constitution, hence there is no triviality. But there is awkwardness, a point that, I think, equally holds for the previous proposal (Bedke, 2008, pp. 4-5). On the one hand, it is awkward to claim that Ronnie's reason for dancing is that by dancing he makes it the case that he dances, or that he makes it more likely that he dances. On the other hand, recall the acceptance of the Deliberative Constraint, it is still much less objectionable to require Ronnie to deliberate about his desire to dance, than to deliberate about metaphysical identity and constitution relations.

If Bedke is right, all those versions of the Model that understand reasons as Schroeder, Goldman and Dancy's interpretations of the Model do, will leave certain reasons out. Is there a way to avoid this conclusion? I can see two. One is to hold that Ronnie's reason is simply that he wants to dance. But this would be giving up the idea that reasons are aspects of the agent's situation and with this the denial of the No Background Condition (Goldman, 2005, p. 509). This in turn would amount to giving up a central part of the theory, and would require an argument against the Deliberative Constraint. The other option is to bite the bullet and claim that in cases like this, where there are no reasons, there are indeed no reasons. However, as Bedke points out, it would be unintelligible for an advocate of the Model to hold that while Ronnie has reason to go to the party, to do all sorts of preparations for the party etc., he has no reason to dance (Bedke, 2008, p. 2). This, I submit, is not a tenable position.

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there is no suitable instrumental belief present. For a discussion and response see Mele (1988).

4. Second problem: the Model and ideals of the person

The second problem concerns the ideal advisor version of the Model. I shall argue that it is subject to an argument by Connie Rosati (Rosati, 1995a, pp. 311-312; 1995b, pp. 53-55).[10] Rosati introduces the problem with an example. Sally is wondering whether she has reason to undergo therapy. Although she doesn't like the idea much, she is also concerned with her life as it is now. On the one hand, she loves order; on the other hand, she finds herself too orderly and admires the spontaneity of her friend, Madelyn. Part of her problem concerns what she misses by being so orderly; yet, there is a more serious question haunting her: whether to remain the sort of person who is rigid and controlled or become more adventuresome like Madelyn. That is, in posing her question Sally wants to know whether she should remain as she is now or whether she should rather change. Therefore she is not interested in how she would react under idealized conditions if those conditions only concern epistemic and cognitive requirements. For, were she to stay as she is now, her rigidity would certainly inform her choice and this is exactly what she wants to avoid.

In sum, when Sally is asking for advice, she wants her advisor not only to possess full information and perfect cognitive capacities, but also to have the character traits of someone like Madelyn. Her inquiry brings out what we, perhaps, should have expected anyway: that when the agent, using condition *C*, asks which desire should guide her, she is in effect asking what *sort* of person to be and what *that* person would desire. Sally is looking for an ideal of the person that would frame her conduct; but at least on the ideal advisor theory, she can find no such thing. This sets the task for advocates of the Model. Unless they want to beg important questions about reasons, thereby producing both too few and too many of them, they must find a way to involve an ideal of the person in their theory.

However, this is a more difficult task than it may at first appear to be. Being reductionists, naturalist advocates of the Model cannot employ substantive evaluative judgments. They cannot say that the ideal advisor *should* possess certain character traits or motives and *should not* possess others (Railton, 1997, 160 15n; 2003, 58, 60; Brandt, 1979, 13). This leaves them with three responses. They can show that an ideal of the person is derivable from the already existing features of their theory; they can appeal to alternative methods of inclusion; or they can argue that there is no need for an ideal of the person in their theory. Since Rosati covers most of the

[10] Cf. Tiberius (1997) for a similar objection.

ground concerning the first response, I will only deal with the one option that she leaves out.[11] Then I turn to the other two responses.

Smith, as we saw, argues that the advisor has a maximally unified and coherent desire set as a result of the idealization process (Smith, 1994, pp. 159-161). Coherence is also the cornerstone of Goldman's Strong Internalism, in fact, he often calls his theory Coherentism (Goldman, 2006, p. 470). Moreover, as Goldman points out, the demand for coherence follows from the constitutive aim of desire: satisfaction. Coherence is required to avoid self-defeat, and hence the frustration of the constitutive aim of satisfaction (Goldman, 2006, p. 481) However, the appeal to coherence is too thin for our purposes. A maximally coherent and unified desire set is compatible with advisors who are not, or at least not without argument, authoritative for the actual agent. This kind of psychology goes well together with the views of the Stoics and Buddhists, whose advice we often do not admire, since they achieve unification and coherence by means of total disengagement (Blackburn, 1998, p. 117). In any case, it is an entirely contingent matter what such an ideally coherent agent will look like; to claim more, it seems, would require invoking prior normative judgments.[12]

Turn now to the second response. There are well-known candidates for inclusion such as conceptual analysis, linguistic intuitions, or empirical research. One could say, for instance, that our use of terms like 'advisor' or 'reason' follows our ideas about what features a person must possess in order to be a competent judge, and those features exclude certain disturbing factors and include others, or, alternatively, involve certain character traits and exclude others. If these moves are defensible, naturalists have a solution at hand. They will have an interpretation of the ideal advisor that does not make use of normative judgments concerning the inclusion or exclusion of certain motives, character traits and the like.

I take this point. I certainly do not think that I have presented anything that would rule out the possibility of a possible naturalist answer along the above lines. It is telling in this respect that Rosati herself considers her objection not as a refutation of the ideal advisor view but more as an attempt to set a task for it (Rosati, 1995b, p. 63; 2000, pp. 810-811; 2003, pp. 496, 527). Yet, this admission does not change the fact that at present

[11] The relevant arguments appear in Rosati (1995ab). The core of the response is to claim that idealization working upon the agent's actual desire set can somehow produce an ideal of the person, or wash away the differences rooted in the agent's actual desire set (a claim that, note, is the same as Smith's point in footnote 3, hence potentially self-defeating for the Model). Rosati argues that this response is contingent, unworkable, or self-defeating for the Model.

[12] Goldman (2006, pp. 476-477) takes up a similar objection, but I don't see how what he says in response has any bearing on the problem.

there are no good accounts available in the literature. True, certain naturalists do find a role for motives in their theory. Williams, for instance, at one point in his argument refers to ignorance and its undesirable effects on the agent's deliberation (Williams, 1981, p. 104). And Roderick Firth claims that our linguistic intuitions support the idea that the 'ideal observer' must be disinterested, dispassionate and consistent, but otherwise normal (Firth, 1952, pp. 335-344).

But neither of these attempts gives us what we need. Williams' exclusion of ignorance does not in itself give us an ideal whose advice we would take to be authoritative, or even produce an example that we would follow. Besides this trait, however, Williams mentions none other, in fact, he says explicitly that no further substantive constraints on the correct deliberator's psychology are allowed (Williams, 1995a, p. 37; 1995b, p. 190). Finally, although Firth's characterization is more substantial, it is so only from the viewpoint of what he intends to define, namely, rightness. Being disinterested and dispassionate are traits that are important for an observer whose job is to judge the rightness of an act, but they would be much less welcome in an account of what reasons there are for a given person to act. What we need in such an account is an advisor, not an observer, and the former, unlike the latter, is interested in and perhaps even passionate about the agent.

If inclusion is problematic, there is the obvious choice of trying to do without it. For such an attempt to be successful, the naturalist must argue that there is no need for an ideal of the person. Here is a way to argue. For a proper presentation, we must switch from reasons to the agent's good, since it is in this respect that the idea typically appears. It goes like this. We can make a distinction between the agent's good and personal ideals such as moral or aesthetic ideals. We can further add that while the former is attached to the agent's present standpoint as defined by his present motivational capacities (though, we should add, these may change as they are worked upon by the idealization process), the latter is *about* which standpoint to prefer. Rosati's question clearly belongs to the sphere of personal ideals since it prefers a standpoint that incorporates an ideal of the person. Hence Rosati's objection does not point to concerns about the naturalist construal of the agent's good as it appears in the ideal advisor view. As a result, though the naturalist account does indeed leave questions open, these questions are not about the agent's good; insofar as this notion is concerned, the ideal advisor view is tolerably revisionist.

This is, I believe, the crux of the matter in the present debate, although advocates of the ideal advisor theory do not in print mention this objection (Rosati, 1995b, p. 59, note 45 reports that the objection was made by

Railton in personal communication).[13] I, however, don't think that this response settles the controversy in the naturalist's favor. As a way of ending my discussion let me offer two reasons.

First, as noted, the response is typically made in discussions about the agent's good. But it is not clear whether the same kind of distinction can be made in the field of reasons. It seems that where the justification of conduct is concerned, questions about standpoints, i.e. about what sort of person to be, may also be relevant and legitimate. In fact, it is not at all clear why the claim would be true even about the agent's good. This, it seems to me, is a rather elusive matter in which decisions do not come easily. For instance, an agent's future is not necessarily attached to her present standpoint. In short, what we need here is an argument, not merely the declaration of a position.[14]

Second, rejecting the idea that determining the agent's good (or reasons) involves questions about what sort of person to be is also in the business of choosing standpoints. For this is exactly to say that the preferred standpoint is provided by the agent's current motivational system, even if it can change due to idealization. And if this is so, a reason needs to be given that justifies this preference. For going along with Rosati's demand for an ideal of the person has a reason in its favor: that unless naturalists build in such an ideal they will lose the ability to allow the agent to pose certain questions about the reasons she has. However, no good reason is presented. One might refer to the intuition that generally stands behind the ideal advisor theory: that the agent's good or reasons should not be alien to the agent. For if they are not alien to the agent, they are also authoritative; or so the thought goes. And if we keep continuity with the agent, we will achieve just this. But this is not enough. There are two ways to keep continuity with the actual agent (Rosati, 1995b, 59-60). One is that whatever suggestions the given account makes should be constrained by *facts* about what the actual agent is like: her physiological and psychological constitution, capacities, circumstances, history and so on (Railton, 1997, p. 142). These facts determine the agent's capacity to change, the costs of these changes and so on (Railton, 2003, p. 54). And, no doubt, the given account must take these facts into account when making a decision about what the actual self should desire. In this sense then, any version of the agent's good or reasons should keep continuity with the actual agent.

But there is another sense, and this is obviously what is referred to in the response, in which continuity is a more controversial matter: it concerns how the facts should be *viewed* (and judged upon). The present suggestion

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[13] However, the consideration does appear explicitly in Noggle (1999, pp. 323-326) and Hubin (1999, pp. 41-42).

[14] I owe this point to Krister Bykvist.

is that they should be viewed from an angle which preserves as much as possible from the agent's actual self; whereas what Rosati suggests is that they should be viewed from an angle that contains an ideal of the person (which, importantly, is endorsed by the agent herself). We are thus back where we started: a reason needs to be given, but no such reason is presented.

5. Summary and concluding remarks

Let me sum up. The above discussion has shown that the investigated naturalist accounts of the Model leave important questions about reasons open. Because of their picture of reasons, they allow for too few reasons; and because of their inadequate account of the ideal advisor, they may allow for both too few and too many reasons. These versions of the Model are thus intolerably revisionist, hence not vindicative. Consequently, the triviality charge follows. Notice though that an important shift has taken place since our first encounter with the arguments of Parfit and Moore. While both OQA and TO are intended to be knock-down arguments, the condition of tolerable revisionism leaves open the possibility that one day a proper naturalist account of reasons, one that is compatible with the Model, will be proposed.[15]

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[15] Hubin (1996), (1999), (2003), Noggle (1999), Murphy (1999), and Zimmerman (2003) may be good candidates.

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