ARE MORAL REQUIREMENTS HYPOTHETICAL IMPERATIVES?

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1. In "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives" (*Philosophical Review* lxxxi, 1972, 305), Philippa Foot argues against the Kantian doctrine, and prevailing orthodoxy, that the requirements of morality are categorical imperatives. She notes that there is a distinction between a use of "should" in which a "should" statement needs withdrawing if the action in question cannot be shown to be ancillary to the agent's desires or interests, and one in which that is not so; and that moral uses of "should" are of the latter sort. She argues, however, that this latter use of "should" does not mark a categorical imperative in the sense intended in the orthodox doctrine; for it is found equally in expressions of the requirements of etiquette. Defenders of the orthodoxy, she assumes, would deny that the requirements of etiquette are categorical imperatives, and would ground the denial on the thesis that it is possible, without irrationality, to question whether one has reason to conform to them. On this assumption, the orthodoxy amounts to the claim that such questioning is not possible with morality. But Mrs Foot insists that the claim is false: there is no irrationality in questioning whether one has reason to act as morality is alleged to require. On this construal of the orthodoxy, then, a categorical imperative is something which must, on pain of irrationality, be recognized as a reason for acting; and Mrs Foot's thesis is that moral requirements are not categorical imperatives in that sense. She concludes that the requirements of morality exert a rational influence on the will only hypothetically; their influence is conditional on the presence of desires which are lacked by those who question whether they have reason to conform.

I want to agree that one need not manifest irrationality in failing to see that one has reason to act as morality requires, but to query whether it follows that moral requirements are only hypothetical imperatives.

2. The terminology calls for some preliminary comment. As Mrs Foot notes, Kant's concern was not with imperatives on a strict grammatical construal of the classification. She concentrates on judgments expressible with the words "should" or "ought"; but I prefer to shift attention away from explicitly prescriptive or normative language altogether.

It seems plausible that if one accepts that one should do something, one accepts that one has a reason to do it. But the reason is not expressed by the "should" statement itself. The reason must involve some appropriate specific consideration which could in principle be cited in support of the "should" statement. Thus, if one does something because one thinks one should, then unless the thought that one should is merely accepted on authority, a more illuminating account of one's reason will be available, citing the appropriate specific consideration which one takes to justify the view that one should act in that way. A formulation of the specific consideration will at least include a mention of what one takes to be relevant features of the circumstances in which the action is to be performed.

Now the fundamental difference at which I think Kant was aiming is one between different ways in which conceptions of circumstances influence the will; that is, between different ways in which they function in the explanation of behaviour in terms of the agent's reasons. To a virtuous person, certain actions are presented as practically necessary—as Kant might have put it—by his view of certain situations in which he finds himself. The question is whether his conceptions of the relevant facts weigh with him only conditionally upon his possession of a desire.

If we think of the requirements of morality as imposed by the circumstances of action, as they are viewed by agents, rather than by the associated "should" thoughts, we make it possible to defend the thesis that virtuous actions are dictated by non-hypothetical imperatives without committing ourselves to the insane thesis that simply to say "You should . . ." to someone is enough to give him a reason for acting; as if, when he protested "But why should I?", it was sufficient to reply "You just should, that's all".

3. When we explain an action in terms of the agent's reasons, we credit him with psychological states given which we can see how doing what he did, or attempted, would have appeared to him in some favourable light. A full specification of a reason must

make clear how the reason was capable of motivating; it must contain enough to reveal the favourable light in which the agent saw his projected action. We tend to assume that this is effected, quite generally, by the inclusion of a desire. (Of course a reason which includes a desire can be specified elliptically, when the desire is obvious enough not to need mentioning; as when we explain someone's taking an umbrella in terms of his belief that it is likely to rain.) However, it seems to be false that the motivating power of all reasons derives from their including desires.

Suppose, for instance, that we explain a person's performance of a certain action by crediting him with awareness of some fact which makes it likely (in his view) that acting in that way will be conducive to his interest. Adverting to his view of the facts may suffice, on its own, to show us the favourable light in which his action appeared to him. No doubt we credit him with an appropriate desire, perhaps for his own future happiness. But the commitment to ascribe such a desire is simply consequential on our taking him to act as he does for the reason we cite; the desire does not function as an independent extra component in a full specification of his reason, hitherto omitted by an understandable ellipsis of the obvious, but strictly necessary in order to show how it is that the reason can motivate him. Properly understood, his belief does that on its own. Thomas Nagel (in *The Possibility of Altruism,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970, pp. 29-30) puts the point like this:

> That I have the appropriate desire simply *follows* from the fact that these considerations motivate me; if the likelihood that an act will promote my future happiness motivates me to perform it now, then it is appropriate to ascribe to me a desire for my own future happiness. But nothing follows about the role of the desire as a condition contributing to the motivational efficacy of those considerations.

This passage is quoted in part, and its thesis endorsed, by Mrs Foot at p.204 of her contribution to the symposium "Reasons for Action and Desires", *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* xlvi, 1972, 189.

Why should the reasons which move people to virtuous behaviour not be similar to the reasons which move them to prudent behaviour? To explain an action we regard as virtuous, we typically formulate a more or less complex characterization of the

action's circumstances as we take the agent to have conceived them. Why should it not be the case, here too, that the agent's conception of the situation, properly understood, suffices to show us the favourable light in which his action appeared to him? If we credit him with a suitable desire, then, as before, that need be no more than a consequence of the fact that we take his conception of the circumstances to have been his reason for acting as he did; the desire need not function as an independent component in the explanation, needed in order to account for the capacity of the cited reason to influence the agent's will.

4. There may seem to be a difficulty: might not another person have exactly the same conception of the circumstances, but see no reason to act as the virtuous person does? If so, adverting to that conception of the situation cannot, after all, suffice to show us the favourable light in which the virtuous person saw his action. Our specification of his reason must, after all, have been elliptical; a full specification would need to add an extra psychological state to account for the action's attractiveness to him in particular—namely, surely, a desire.

We can evade this argument by denying its premiss: that is, by taking a special view of the virtuous person's conception of the circumstances, according to which it cannot be shared by someone who sees no reason to act as the virtuous person does.

This may seem problematic. But if one concedes that a conception of the facts can constitute the whole of a reason for prudent behaviour, one is not at liberty to object to the very idea that a view of how things are might not need supplementing with a desire in order to reveal the favourable light in which someone saw some action; and a view with that property surely cannot be shared by someone who sees no reason to act in the way in question. If this is allowed for prudence, why should it not be allowed for morality too?

Suppose someone was incapable of seeing how a fact about the likely effect of an action on his own future could, on its own, constitute a reason for the action. On some suitable occasion, he might be unmoved by such a fact. It would not be wrong to say that an ordinarily prudent person, in parallel circumstances, would differ from him in having a certain desire. But according to the concession, the desire is not a further component, over and above the prudent person's conception of the likely effects of his action on his own future, in the explanation of his prudent be-

haviour. It is not that the two people share a certain neutral conception of the facts, but differ in that one, but not the other, has an independent desire as well, which combines with that neutral conception of the facts to cast a favourable light on his acting in a certain way. The desire is ascribable to the prudent person simply in recognition of the fact that his conception of the likely effects of his action on his own future by itself casts a favourable light on his acting as he does. So the admitted difference in respect of desire should be explicable, like the difference in respect of action, in terms of a more fundamental difference in respect of how they conceive the facts.

It is not clear that we really can make sense of the idea of someone who is otherwise rational but cannot see how facts about his future can, by themselves, constitute reasons for him to act in various ways. But to the extent to which the idea does make sense, it seems to be on just the lines we should expect: we picture him as someone with an idiosyncratic view of what it is for a fact to concern his own future. Perhaps he thinks of the person involved in such a fact as some future person, connected with the one who is currently deliberating by links of continuity and resemblance which are too tenuous, in his view, for it to be anything but arbitrary for the current deliberator to pay special attention to that future person's welfare. What is special about a prudent version is a different understanding of what it is for a fact to concern his own future. He sees things otherwise in the relevant area; and we comprehend his prudent behaviour by comprehending the relevant fragment of his world view, not by appealing to the desire which is admittedly ascribable to him. That is to be understood, no less than the behaviour is, in terms of the world view.

Why should it not be similar with explanations of virtuous behaviour in terms of the virtuous person's conceptions of situations in which he acts?

5. So far I have responded only *ad hominem* to qualms about the idea that a conception of how things are might constitute, on its own, a reason for virtuous action. That is how it was conceded to be with prudential reasons, and there is no obvious argument that the possibility, once granted, should be restricted to prudential considerations. But presumably someone with sufficiently strong doubts about the case of morality will be encouraged to doubt the whole idea, and suppose that it cannot be so

even with prudential reasons; he will not be impressed by the thought that, if granted there, the possibility cannot be dismissed out of hand for the case of morality.

I suppose the general doubt is on these lines. A view of how things are is a state or disposition of one's cognitive equipment. But the psychological states we are considering are to suffice, on their own, to show how certain actions appeared in a favourable light. That requires that their possession entails a disposition of the possessor's will. And will and belief—the appetitive and the cognitive—are distinct existences; so a state which presents itself as cognitive but entails an appetitive state must be, after all, only impurely cognitive, and contain the appetitive state as a part. If such a state strikes its possessor as cognitive, that is because he is projecting his states of will on to the world (a case of the mind's propensity to spread itself upon objects). The appetitive state should be capable in principle of being analysed out, leaving a neutrally cognitive residue. Thus where it appears that a conception of how things are exhausts an agent's reason for acting in a certain way, an analysed and less misleading formulation of the reason will be bipartite: it will specify, first, a neutral conception of the facts, available equally to someone who sees no reason to act in the way in question, and, secondly, a desire, which combines with that conception of the facts to make the action attractive to its possessor.

This paper is primarily addressed to those who are vulnerable to the *ad hominem* argument. In their view, since the line of thought I have just sketched falsifies the workings of prudential explanations of behaviour, it simply cannot be generally right. In the rest of this section I shall make some remarks, not *ad hominem*, about the general issue; but a proper discussion is impossible here.

There is room for scepticism about the acceptability of discounting the appearances in the way the objection urges. Explanation of behaviour by reasons purports to show the favourable light in which an agent saw his action. If it strikes an agent that his reason for acting as he does consists entirely in his conception of the circumstances in which he acts, then an explanation which insists on analysing that seemingly cognitive state into a less problematically cognitive state combined with a separate desire, while it will show the action as attractive from

the standpoint of the psychological states it cites, is not obviously guaranteed to get the favourable light right. If one accepts an explanation of the analysing sort, one will not be baffled by inability to find any point one can take the agent to have seen in behaving as he did; but what leaves one unpuzzled is not thereby shown to be a *correct* explanation.

The analysis will nevertheless seem compulsory, if the objection seems irresistible. If the world is, in itself, motivationally inert, and is also the proper province of cognitive equipment, it is inescapable that a strictly cognitive state—a conception of how things are, properly so called—cannot constitute the whole of a reason for acting. But the idea of the world as motivationally inert is not an independent hard datum. It is simply the metaphysical counterpart of the thesis that states of will and cognitive states are distinct existences; which is exactly what is in question.

If a conception of a set of circumstances can suffice on its own to explain an action, then the world view it exemplifies is certainly not the kind of thing that could be established by the methods of the natural sciences. But the notion of the world, or how things are, which is appropriate in this context is a metaphysical notion, not a scientific one: world views richer than that of science are not scientific, but not on that account unscientific (a term of opprobrium for answers other than those of science to science's questions). To query their status as world views on the ground of their not being scientific is to be motivated not by science but by scientism.

6. It is not to be denied that behaviour which is in fact virtuous can in some cases be found unsurprising through being what one would expect anyway, given an acceptably ascribed desire which is independently intelligible. That is why sheer bafflement at virtuous behaviour in general is very difficult to imagine. At some points even the rankest outsider would be able to attain a measure of comprehension of virtuous actions in terms of desires which people just naturally have: for instance the desire that people related to them in various ways should not suffer. Such coincidences constitute possible points of entry for an outsider trying to work his way into appreciation of a moral outlook. Similarly, they perhaps partly explain how it is possible to acquire a moral outlook of one's own (not the same topic, since one can understand a moral outlook without sharing it).

What is questionable is whether there need *always* be an independently intelligible desire to whose fulfilment a virtuous action, if rational at all, can be seen as conducive.

Charitable behaviour aims at an end, namely the good of others. (See "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives", pp. 313–4.) It does not follow that a full specification of the agent's reason for a charitable act would need to add a desire to his conception of the circumstances in which he acted. For prudent behaviour equally aims at an end, namely one's own future happiness. The desire for the good of others is related to charity as the desire for one's own future happiness is related to prudence; not, then, as a needed extra ingredient in formulations of reasons for acting. Rather, the desire is ascribed, as in the prudential case, simply in recognition of the fact that a charitable person's special way of conceiving situations by itself casts a favourable light on charitable actions. Of course a desire ascribed in this purely consequential way is not independently intelligible.

It does not seem plausible that any purely natural fellow-feeling or benevolence, unmediated by the special ways of seeing situations which are characteristic of charity as it is thought of above, would issue in behaviour which exactly matched that of a charitable person; the objects of a purely natural benevolence could not be guaranteed to coincide in all cases with the good of others as a possessor of the virtue would conceive it. It seems still less plausible that virtuous behaviour in general could be duplicated by means of the outcomes of independently intelligible desires.

Mrs Foot sometimes seems to suggest that if someone acts in a way he takes to be morally required, and his behaviour cannot be shown to be rational as a case of conformity to an hypothetical imperative, then he must be blindly obeying an inculcated code. (See "Reasons for Action and Desires", p. 210: "Perhaps we have been bewitched by the idea that we *just do* have reason to obey this part of our moral code". This thought, about honesty, is not endorsed; but it seems to be put forward as the sole alternative to the thought that we should explain honest behaviour in terms of desires.) But if we deny that virtuous behaviour can always be explained as the outcome of independently intelligible desires, we do not thereby commit ourselves to its being mere obedience to a code. There need be no possibility of reducing

virtuous behaviour to rules. In moral upbringing what one learns is not to behave on conformity with rules of conduct, but to see situations in a special light, as constituting reasons for acting; this perceptual capacity, once acquired, can be exercised in complex novel circumstances, not necessarily capable of being foreseen and legislated for by a codifier of the conduct required by virtue, however wise and thoughtful he might be.

On this view, independently intelligible desires will take an outsider only some of the distance towards full understanding of virtuous behaviour. In the first place, there will be some actions which simply cannot be explained as the outcomes of such desires. Second, if one sticks with explanations in terms of independently intelligible desires at the points of entry, where such explanations do make actions unpuzzling, one will not have the full picture even of those actions: if they manifest a virtuous person's distinctive way of seeing things, they must be explicable also in terms of exercises of that perceptual capacity, which need no supplementing with desires to yield full specifications of reasons. (This need not imply that the initial explanations, at the points of entry, were wrong. Someone can have two separate reasons for what he does; perhaps he can do it for both of them. If so, we need not suppose—as Kant perhaps did—that an action's being the outcome of a natural desire disqualifies it as a manifestation of virtue.)

§ 4 suggests that if someone could not see the force of prudential considerations, one might appropriately protest: "You don't know what it means for a fact to concern your future." Rather similarly, in urging behaviour one takes to be morally required, one finds oneself saying things like this: "You don't know what it means that someone is shy and sensitive." Conveying what a circumstance means, in this loaded sense, is getting someone to see it in the special way in which a virtuous person would see it. In the attempt to do so, one exploits contrivances similar to those one exploits in other areas where the task is to back up the injunction "See it like this": helpful juxtapositions of cases, descriptions with carefully chosen terms and carefully placed emphasis, and the like. (Compare, for instance, what one might do and say to someone who says "Jazz sounds to me like a mess, a mere welter of uncoordinated noise".) No such contrivances can be guaranteed success, in the sense that failure would show irrationality on

the part of the audience. That, together with the importance of rhetorical skills to their successful deployment, sets them apart from the sorts of thing we typically regard as paradigms of argument. But these seem insufficient grounds for concluding that they are appeals to passion as opposed to reason: for concluding that "See it like this" is really a covert invitation to feel, quite over and above one's view of the facts, a desire which will combine with one's belief to recommend acting in the appropriate way.

Failure to see what a circumstance means, in the loaded sense, is of course compatible with competence, by all ordinary tests, with the language used to describe the circumstance; that brings out how loaded the notion of meaning involved in the protest is. Notice that, as the example of "shy and sensitive" illustrates, the language used to express a special reason-constituting conception of a situation need not be explicitly evaluative.

The question "Why should I conform to the dictates of morality?" is most naturally understood as asking for an extra-moral motivation which will be gratified by virtuous behaviour. So understood, the question has no answer. What may happen is that someone is brought to see things as a virtuous person does, and so stops feeling the need to ask it. Situation by situation, he knows why he should behave in the relevant ways; but what he now has is a set of answers to a different interpretation of the question. (See pp. 152–3 of D. Z. Phillips, "In Search of the Moral 'Must': Mrs Foot's Fugitive Thought", *Philosophical Quarterly* xxvii, 1977, 140—an article from which I have profited in writing this.)

7. We have, then, an apparent contrast between two ways in which an agent's view of how things are can function in explaining his actions. In one, exemplified by the case of taking one's umbrella (§ 3), the agent's belief about how things are combines with an independently intelligible desire to represent the action as a good thing from the agent's point of view. In the other, a conception of how things are suffices on its own to show us the favourable light in which the action appeared. Beliefs about one's future well-being standardly operate in the second way, according to the concession of § 3; so, according to the suggestion of this paper, do moral reasons.

With reasons which function in the second way, it is not false that they weigh with people only if they have a certain desire. But that is just because the ascription of the desire in question fol-

lows from the fact that the reasons weigh as they do. It would be wrong to infer that the conceptions of situations which constitute the reasons are available equally to people who are not swayed by them, and weigh with those who are swayed only contingently upon their possession of an independent desire. That would be to assimilate the second kind of reason to the first. To preserve the distinction, we should say that the relevant conceptions are not so much as possessed except by those whose wills are influenced appropriately. Their status as reasons is hypothetical only in this truistic sense: they sway only those who *have* them.

When we envisaged a person immune to the force of prudential considerations, we supposed that he might have an idiosyncratic understanding of what it was for a fact to concern his own future (§ 4). Particular facts about his own future, by themselves, would leave him cold. Now we might imagine equipping him with a separate desire, for the welfare of the future person he takes to be involved in the relevant facts. Then his conception of those facts might move him to action, with their influence conditional upon his possession of that extra desire. But the resulting behaviour, only hypothetically called for by his conception of the facts, would match ordinary prudent behaviour only externally. It would be wrong to conclude that ordinary prudent behaviour is likewise only hypothetically commanded.

Similarly, someone who lacks a virtuous person's distinctive view of a situation might perhaps be artificially induced into a simulacrum of a virtuous action by equipping him with an independent desire. His conception of the situation would then be influencing his will hypothetically. But it would be wrong to conclude that a virtuous person's actions are likewise only hypothetically commanded by his conceptions of such situations. (§ 6 suggests, anyway, a special difficulty about the idea that virtuous behaviour might be thus artificially duplicated across the board.)

According to this position, then, a failure to see reason to act virtuously stems, not from the lack of a desire on which the rational influence of moral requirements is conditional, but from the lack of a distinctive way of seeing situations. If that perceptual capacity is possessed and exercised, it yields non-hypothetical reasons for acting. Now the lack of a perceptual capacity, or failure to exercise it, need show no irrationality. (It might be argued that not to have the relevant conception of one's own future, in

the prudential case, would be irrational; but a parallel argument in the moral case would lack plausibility.) Thus we can grant Mrs Foot's premiss—that it is possible without irrationality to fail to see reason to act as morality requires—without granting her conclusion—that moral requirements exert a rational influence on the will only hypothetically. The gap opens because we have undermined the assumption that a consideration can exert a rational influence on a will other than hypothetically only if it is recognizable as a requirement by all rational men.

Mrs Foot thought her opponents would differentiate moral requirements from those of etiquette by claiming that moral requirements, unlike those of etiquette, are recognizable as requirements by all rational men; that is, that they are categorical imperatives in the sense stipulated by the assumption we have undermined. Obviously this paper does not conform to that expectation. In respect of not necessarily impressing any rational man, moral requirements and the requirements of etiquette are alike, and it is not my intention here to discuss in detail what makes them different. (Many actions performed for reasons of etiquette can be explained in terms of bewitchment by a code. There may be a residue of actions not explicable in that way. It does not seem to me to be obviously absurd, or destructive of the point of any distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives, to suppose that such residual actions might be most revealingly explained in terms of non-hypothetically reason-constituting conceptions of circumstances. One can attribute such conceptions to others without being compelled oneself; for one can appreciate how someone might see things a certain way without seeing them that way oneself.)

I have said nothing about where the line is to be drawn between hypothetical and non-hypothetical reasons for action. For purposes of exposition, I have assumed that when one explains taking an umbrella in terms of the agent's belief that it will probably rain, the reason specified needs supplementing with a desire. But it would not matter if someone insisted that what appears as a desire, in the most natural filling out of the reason, is actually better regarded as a cognitive state, a colouring of the agent's view of the world. If it is admitted that we can make sense of the idea of a reason of the second sort distinguished above, then there is content to the thesis that moral reasons are of

that sort, even if it turns out that there are no reasons of the first sort.

Note that consequentially ascribed desires are indeed desires. Construing obedience to a categorical imperative as acting for a certain sort of reason, we can see the obedience as a case of doing what one wants. So subjection to categorical imperatives, even without the coincidences with natural desires mentioned in § 6, need not be pictured as a grim servitude.

8. The strategy of this paper must raise the question whether I am treating prudential considerations as categorical imperatives. (It would be pleasant if Mrs Foot could be represented as holding that prudential imperatives are categorical and moral imperatives hypothetical.) The answer depends on which of Kant's characterizations of hypothetical imperatives we have in mind.

On the one hand, I interpret the concession of § 3 as implying this: a prudent person's conception of facts about his own future exerts an influence on his will in its own right, not contingently upon his possession of an independent desire.

On the other hand, Kant's hypothetical imperatives are supposed to "declare a possible action to be practically necessary as a means to the attainment of something else that one wills (or that one may will)" (translation by H. J. Paton, *The Moral Law*, Hutchinson, London, 1948, p. 82). And it is certainly true that prudential considerations typically recommend actions as means to ends distinct from themselves.

Are not moral imperatives sometimes equally hypothetical in the second sense? Kant was committed to denying that moral considerations can recommend an action as a means to an end distinct from itself, but the denial seems desperately implausible. Perhaps the idea that one has to exclude means-end reasons from the sphere of virtue can be explained on the following lines. From the concession of § 3, we can see that if an action's rationality consists in its conduciveness to an end distinct from itself (the agent's future happiness, say), it does not follow that the willing of the distinct end is a desire intelligible independently of understanding the reason-constituting character of facts about such conduciveness. But though it does not follow, it would be natural to suppose that it does. Kant's fundamental aim was to deny that the motivating capacity of moral considerations needs explaining from outside, in terms of desires which are not intrinsically moral

– that is, to deny that moral requirements are hypothetical imperatives in the first sense. Given the natural error, he would think he had to deny that virtuous behaviour is ever rational as a means to a distinct end—that is, to deny that moral requirements are ever hypothetical imperatives in the second sense.

9. The suggestion, so far, has been this: one cannot share a virtuous person's view of a situation in which it seems to him that virtue requires some action, but see no reason to act in that way. The following possibility is still open: one sees reason to act in that way, but takes the reason to be outweighed by a reason for acting in some other way. But part of the point of claiming that the requirements of virtue are categorical imperatives may lie in a rejection of that possibility.

The rejection might stem from the idea that the dictates of virtue always outweigh reasons for acting otherwise. But I believe a more interesting ground for it is the idea that the dictates of virtue, if properly appreciated, are not weighed with other reasons at all, not even on a scale which always tips on their side. If a situation in which virtue imposes a requirement is genuinely conceived as such, according to this view, then considerations which, in the absence of the requirement, would have constituted reasons for acting otherwise are silenced altogether—not overridden—by the requirement.

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" Obviously we are not meant to answer "The profits are outweighed by counterbalancing losses". The intended answer is "Nothing". At that price, whatever one might achieve does not count as profit. Or, in the terminology of reasons: the attractions of whatever wickedness might bring do not constitute some reason for wickedness, which is, however, overridden by the reasons against it; rather, given that they are achieved by wickedness, those attractive outcomes do not count as reasons at all.

10. Aristotle's thoughts about continence, incontinence, and virtue involve such a view of the status of the requirements of virtue. Perhaps the requirements are not exactly moral requirements, since Aristotle's notion of virtue is perhaps not exactly a moral notion. But his view may nevertheless usefully illustrate the structure of the position described in § 9, and help to explain the distinction between silencing and overriding.

For Aristotle, if one needs to overcome an inclination to act otherwise, in getting oneself to act temperately, then one's action manifests continence rather than the virtue of temperance. Readers are apt to be puzzled about how they are meant to think of the virtue. Is the temperate person's libido somehow peculiarly undemanding? Does his inclination to sleep with someone he ought not to sleep with evaporate under the impact of the thought that he would not enjoy it at all (why ever not, unless he is not quite human?); or under the impact of the thought that his enjoyment would be counterbalanced by pangs of remorse?

In fact the idea is on these lines. The temperate person need be no less prone to enjoy physical pleasure than the next man. In suitable circumstances it will be true that he would enjoy some intemperate action which is available to him. In the absence of a requirement, the prospective enjoyment would constitute a reason for going ahead. But his clear perception of the requirement insulates the prospective enjoyment—of which, for a satisfying conception of the virtue, we should want him to have a vivid appreciation—from engaging his inclinations at all. Here and now, it does not count for him as any reason for acting in that way.

Virtues like temperance and courage involve steadfastness in face of characteristic sorts of temptation, and it can seem impossible to register that fact without regarding them as cases of continence. Insisting nevertheless on the distinction between virtue and continence yields a view of these virtues which has a certain sublimity. Their proper manifestation is a renunciation, without struggle, of something which in the abstract one would value highly (physical pleasure, security of life and limb). The lack of struggle is ensured by keeping the attention firmly fixed on what Aristotle calls "the noble"; not by a weighing of attractions which leads to the conclusion that on balance the virtuous course is more desirable. (It is true that the competing course could not really satisfy a virtuous person. But that is not to say that he judges it on balance less desirable; it records a consequence of his conviction that in these circumstances the attractions of the competing course count for nothing.) Genuinely courageous behaviour, on this view, combines a lively awareness of risk, and a normal valuation of life and health (see *Nicomachean Ethics* III. 9), with a sort of serenity; taking harm to be, by definition, what one has

reason to avoid, we can see the serenity as based on the belief, paradoxical in juxtaposition with the valuing of life and health, that no harm can come to one by acting thus.

This view of virtue obviously involves a high degree of idealization; the best we usually encounter is to some degree tainted with continence. But in a view of what genuine virtue is, idealization is not something to be avoided or apologized for.

It is evident that this view of virtue makes incontinence problematic. The weak incontinent person must conceive the circumstances of his action in a way which, in some sense, matches the way a virtuous person would conceive them, since he knows he is not acting as virtue demands. But the virtuous person conceives the relevant sorts of situation in such a way that considerations which would otherwise be reasons for acting differently are silenced by the recognized requirement. If the incontinent person has such a conception, how can those considerations make themselves heard by his will, as they do? Obviously continence poses a parallel difficulty.

The way out is to attenuate the degree to which the continent or incontinent person's conception of a situation matches that of a virtuous person. Their inclinations are aroused, as the virtuous person's are not, by their awareness of competing attractions: a lively desire clouds or blurs the focus of their attention on "the noble".

Curiously enough, if we approach incontinence on these lines, we entirely disarm one difficulty which threatens it on other approaches. (I owe this thought to David Wiggins.) Suppose we think of the incontinent person as failing to act on a judgment "all things considered", in which the motivating potential of alternative actions is registered by his counting their attractions, suitably weighted, as reasons for acting in those ways. The judgment will have to be that those reasons are outweighed by the force of the reason for the virtuous action. But now it seems mysterious how one of those alternative motivations can take charge. Why is its ability to move one not exhausted by the weight it is pictured as bringing to the scale? On the view I am describing, by contrast, the motivating potential of the competing attractions has not exerted any influence in forming the judgment which the person should have acted on—so that, as above, it might be expected to have used itself up there, and it is mysterious how it

can still have energy to inject after it has been outweighed. The virtuous view of what should be done does not so much as take those attractions into account. So we can think of them as a potential source of motivating energy, not used up in the formation of the judgment. There can be a risk that the potential will be actualized, if the attractions are not insulated, by the clear perception of a silencing requirement, from engaging the inclinations.

A *caveat*: notice that the position is not that clear perception of any moral reason, however weak, silences any reasons of other sorts, however strong. The reasons which silence are those which mark out actions as required by virtue. There can be less exigent moral reasons, and as far as this position goes, they may be overridden.

11. In § 8 I left moral and prudential considerations not sharply distinguished in the manner of their influence on the will. But the view that those moral reasons which count as imposing requirements are special, in the way described in § 9 and illustrated in § 10, restores a distinction. On this view, to conceive some relevant fact about one's future as an ordinarily prudent person would is not, after all, *eo ipso* to take oneself to have a reason for the prudent behaviour which would normally be recommended by such a fact. If one is clearly aware of a moral requirement to behave differently, one will not take the prudential consideration as the reason it would otherwise be. (It is not plausible to suppose that perception of the moral requirement effects this by tampering with one's understanding of what it is for a fact to concern one's own future.) So prudential considerations, on this view, are hypothetical imperatives in a new sense: their rational influence on the will is conditional, not upon a desire, but upon the absence of a clearly grasped moral requirement to do something else. Moral requirements, by contrast, are not conditional at all: neither upon desires nor upon the absence of other reasons.

ARE MORAL REQUIREMENTS HYPOTHETICAL IMPERATIVES?

John McDowell and I. G. McFetridge

*II—I. G. McFetridge**

Mr. McDowell suggests that the requirements of morality are categorical, or non-hypothetical, imperatives in two senses. In the first, and central, sense the suggestion is that when a virtuous agent is rationally motivated by what he regards as a moral requirement, the influence on his will of his conception of what, in the circumstances, he takes as imposing the requirement, is not conditional on his possession of any desire. In the second sense, the suggestion is that moral *requirements* (though not *any* moral reasons), if clearly perceived as such, not merely override but silence other considerations. In the presence of such a perception conflicting considerations count for the agent as no reasons at all.

I shall confine myself to discussing some issues raised by McDowell's first suggestion, and shall have to leave untouched many important questions raised, particularly in the final sections, by his striking paper. This first suggestion is opposed to Mrs. Foot's view that a man's being rationally swayed by moral considerations is conditional on his possession of suitable desires. She grounds this claim, according to McDowell, on the premiss that an agent can, without irrationality, see no reason to act as morality requires, a premiss with which McDowell agrees. But, McDowell argues, there is a third possibility: that a virtuous agent should act, with reason, on moral considerations simply because his distinctive conceptions of the facts cast, independently of his desires, a favourable light on the actions in question. Since, McDowell argues, it would not be irrational to lack the relevant conceptions, the suggestion occupies a position Mrs. Foot's argument might have been thought to rule out.

The distinctive conceptions are thought of as cognitive states, beliefs about how things are. A virtuous agent, then, is not primarily to be characterised as one possessed of certain desires or

* I am very grateful to Samuel Guttenplan for help in writing this paper.

sentiments, rather as someone with certain distinctive beliefs about the world. Familiarly, such cognitivist accounts of moral psychology have been thought exposed to the objection that a belief is never sufficient, on its own, to constitute a reason for acting: a separate desire is also required. Thus such a view would, absurdly, divorce the notion of a virtuous agent from the idea of someone motivated to act in certain ways. But, McDowell argues, Mrs. Foot at least is in no position to urge this general objection, having conceded that prudential reasons are not of this familiar, Humean, type.

For McDowell, if a person acts on a non-hypothetical imperative, in the central sense, an explanation of his action, in terms of his reasons, will proceed merely by ascribing to him a conception of how things are, a belief. Properly understood, this will suffice to reveal the favourable light in which he saw the action. Our ascription to him of a suitable desire is merely consequential on our taking him to have acted for the reason in question. Such a desire, then, can play no rôle in explaining why he saw reason to act as he did. It, no less than the action, is to be made intelligible in the light of the agent's conception of the facts.

I agree with McDowell that there is no good general argument, starting from the nature of belief, or from some independently grounded account of the notion of how things are, against the possibility of such a mode of explaining actions. And clearly Mrs. Foot is committed to agreeing with this. To agree, however, that an agent's conception of how things are can serve on its own to explain his seeing reason to act as he did, is not yet to take any view concerning *how* this is possible, or concerning when such explanations are acceptable. Thus to concede, for example, that such explanations are possible in the case of prudential actions may not automatically be to concede the possibility in the case of moral actions. For one's view that it is possible to explain prudential behaviour in this way may rest on a particular model of *how*, there, it is possible: and this model may meet conditions of acceptability which one thought were crucial, but which one saw no reason to think could be met, in general, by explanations of virtuous behaviour which alluded merely to the virtuous agent's conceptions of how things are. I shall explore this suggestion, hoping also to raise some more general issues concerning McDowell's position.

Mrs. Foot and McDowell both express, in part, their conception of the rôle of desire in the explanation of prudential behaviour—a rôle duplicated in McDowell's account of virtuous behaviour—by means of a quotation from Nagel's *The Possibility of Altruism* (Oxford, 1970). It is unclear how far either take themselves to be committed to the details of his account of prudential motivation. (In fact, as we shall see, despite appearances, McDowell's own remarks on prudence point to a view distinct from Nagel's.) I shall suggest, though, that Nagel's account does offer a satisfactory view of how an agent's distinctive conception of the world could play a part in explaining why he saw reason, not dependent on his desires, to act in a certain way: but that it serves ill as a model for McDowell's view of virtuous behaviour. Hence if one's commitment to the possibility, in the case of prudential behaviour, was based on acceptance of Nagel's account, one would not be compelled to admit as possible a view of moral behaviour like McDowell's.

McDowell holds that a man's prudential behaviour is to be explained in terms of his distinctive conception of what it is for a fact to concern his own future, a view which he might lack if, say, he thought of the person involved in such a fact as some remote future self. This certainly echoes many remarks of Nagel's, where he suggests that he is going to explain the acceptance of prudential reasons in terms of what it is for an agent to identify future stages of a person as stages of *his* life. But it is an important feature of Nagel's argument that his account of prudential reasons does not in fact relate them to any view the agent has of *his* future, but rather to a view he has of *the* future, and indeed, more generally, of time. Indeed for Nagel prudential reasons are reasons relating to any kind of provision for the future and have, in general, no peculiar connexion with the future interests of the agent (*op. cit.* p.36).

Nagel's concern is to show how, independently of a present desire, an agent can be rationally motivated by the thought that he *will* have reason to promote a certain state of affairs. He finds the solution in a conception he claims we have of time, namely, that all times, past, present and future, are equally real. Fully to possess this conception, Nagel maintains, is to have the belief that the content of any judgment cannot shift with tense. Thus, for example, everything that can be said now about the future,

using the future tense, will be statable in the present tense when the future arrives. All that changes is the temporal point of view. This unchanging content can, then, be fully captured in tenseless judgments. This last thought will, Nagel claims, for one who has this conception quite generally, extend to practical judgments, judgments concerning what the agent has reason to do. It follows that an agent's tensed judgment that he *will* have reason to promote a certain state of affairs must, for one fully possessed of this conception, commit him, independently of any present desire, to the tenseless judgment that he has reason to promote that state of affairs. This latter judgment, on this conception, is taken to possess the same content as the judgment, made in the present tense, that he *now* has reason to promote that state of affairs. Since, Nagel claims, to accept such a judgment is, other things being equal, to be motivated to promote that state of affairs, Nagel claims to have shown how, independently of present desires, an agent can be motivated by prudential considerations.

This is only the barest sketch of Nagel's position, omitting much which he would regard as crucial. It will serve, though, to pursue the above suggestion, namely, that conceding that explanations of prudential behaviour could rest merely on an agent's conception of how things are, need not, if the concession involved a commitment to Nagel's account, require one to concede that virtuous behaviour could, in general, be thus explained.

An action is dictated by a non-hypothetical imperative if there is a conception of the facts, possessed by the agent, attribution of which to him serves, on its own, to reveal the favourable light in which he saw the action. It would seem important, then, that if an action is to be taken as dedicated by a non-hypothetical imperative, that the relevant conception can be ascribed to the agent and in such a way as to do precisely that. In Nagel's account of prudence this seems to be achieved. The relevant conception of how things are is capable of being ascribed to the agent in a straightforward way—by saying of him that he believes that such-and-such—because it is explicitly stated *what* the relevant conception, the belief, is. And the rôle of ascription of such a conception in revealing why an agent should see reason to act on prudential considerations is of a quite familiar kind. The content of a motivating belief—that the agent now has reason to pro-

mote a certain state of affairs—is shown to (more or less) follow from the general conception in question plus an additional premiss, namely, that he *will* have reason to promote that state of affairs. Thus the agent's motivating belief that he has reason to promote that state of affairs is explained in a style familiar from the explanation of beliefs, as being the consequence of other beliefs which he has. Grounds are thus given for the claim, crucial to both Nagel and McDowell, that seeing reason to act in certain ways is a criterion of possession of the relevant conception, properly understood.

Turning to McDowell's view of virtue, and more generally of actions which are non-hypothetically commanded, problems arise concerning the extent to which the relevant conceptions can so much as be ascribed. A first question concerns *who* McDowell thinks of as being able to ascribe such conceptions and, hence, see the actions in question as being non-hypothetically commanded. The issue may be raised by noting a contrast between a remark he makes during a brief discussion of etiquette (§7) and his treatment of the case of morality in §6. In the case of actions conforming to the requirements of etiquette, he suggests that there need be no absurdity in seeing at least some of these as being explained in terms of distinctive conceptions of circumstances which provide non-hypothetical reasons for action. He goes on to remark that "one can attribute such conceptions to others without being compelled oneself". His remarks about virtuous behaviour suggest a different picture. Here the outsider—one, presumably, quite unmoved by the demands of virtue—is indeed allowed some understanding of virtuous action: but not, here, because he is in a position to ascribe, though himself unswayed, those conceptions of how things are which reveal the virtuous agent's actions as non-hypothetically commanded. Rather the thought is that the outsider can, at best, understand the virtuous agent's seeing reason to act as he does as being conditional on his possession of certain 'natural' desires, an understanding which will be doubly inadequate, in McDowell's view. It will, he claims, at best cover *some* cases of virtuous behaviour, and even there it will not reveal the actions in their true light. My question is: if the relevant kind of understanding is to be denied to a moral outsider, why should it be allowed to the outsider in the case of etiquette?

I shall return to that question later. At the moment, pursuing certain contrasts with Nagel's account of prudence, I wish to raise a more general question about the possibility of ascribing to an agent the kind of conception required to reveal, on its own, the favourable light in which he saw a virtuous action. To do so is to ascribe to him a belief to the effect that the situation has certain features which he takes to require a particular course of action. Now, as McDowell notes (§6), the features of the situation which a virtuous agent takes as requiring the action may be describable in language with which one who sees no reason to act as the virtuous agent does is fully competent, "by all ordinary tests". Now presumably part of being thus competent is having the ability to apply the descriptions in question to situations in general conformity with other users of the language, including those swayed by moral considerations. Thus it is perfectly possible that one who sees no reason, in a given situation, to act as a virtuous agent would, may agree on all those descriptions of the situation which the virtuous agent would offer as stating what, in the situation, demanded the action in question. Thus, for example, someone might offer, as his description of what gave him reason to spend so much time with X, that X was lonely and despairing and needed someone to talk to. Someone else might well accept that description but see it as providing no reason to be in X's company, indeed as providing very good reason for avoiding X. Thus remarking of the virtuous agent "He believed that X was lonely and despairing and needed someone to talk to" cannot serve to attribute to him the relevant conception. For the conception was supposedly lacking in the agent who saw no reason to perform the action which virtue might require: and this difference was to explain the difference in their response to the situation. But the foregoing remark may equally be made of the second agent. Suppose then that one imposed the following adequacy condition on claims that an agent's reason for action consisted merely in his conception of how things are, namely, that it be possible actually to ascribe the relevant conception to the agent: one might then be able to concede that, say, prudential reasons were of this sort—for Nagel's account meets this condition—while having doubts concerning whether it was possible that reasons for virtuous behaviour were, in general, of this kind.

This condition will seem less than compelling, though, if we regard, as McDowell does, a virtuous agent's conception of the circumstances as analogous to a perceptual state. For in explanations of actions of a quite uncontroversial, desire-based, kind, we have, in perceptual states, a clear example of an agent's view of how things are being invoked to explain actions, and differences between two agents' views of how things are being invoked to explain differences in action, without its necessarily being possible fully to ascribe the relevant cognitive content or the relevant differences in cognitive content. For example, a man's choice among certain objects, say gramophone recordings or wines, might be acknowledged to result from a combination of certain desires with how he perceptually took the objects to be, even though we, and he, were quite unable explicitly to state what, in the way he took the objects to be, cast a favourable light on his choice. And divergent choices, in the same situation, by different people, might be acknowledged to result, not from their having different desires, but from differences in how they perceptually took the objects to be, again without the relevant details of the differences in their perceptual beliefs being verbally expressible.

I shall suggest, though, what may be a difficulty in taking the virtuous agent's conceptions of situations as being, in *this* way, analogous to perceptual states. We think of perceptual states as cognitive, as capable of representing how things are, while allowing that how, exactly, they represent things to be may exceed our capacity to state. Our ability to think of such states in this way rests on our being able to regard the means by which the objects of perception are brought to consciousness as being, at least in part, of a non-conceptualized kind. (There are familiar difficulties in the philosophy of perception concerning how exactly we are to think of this.) Very crudely, in perception of an object or a situation we can acquire more knowledge than we can say because in perceptual awareness what we are given we are not told. But that need not, it would seem, be the case in our awareness of a situation in which virtue demands a certain action. We may simply be told of the circumstances, in language unfitted to express any conception of the situation distinctive to a virtuous agent and then 'see' what is demanded. What is difficult to understand is how, here, one has acquired knowledge which cannot be fully attributed to one by means of the description of the situation

which constituted one's only means of such acquisition. It is not clear, then, that the perceptual analogy can be used to undercut the demand, met by Nagel's account of prudence, that the conceptions which allegedly explain the actions be capable of ascription.

A second important feature of Nagel's account of prudence is that it provides a clear model of *how* ascribing a conception of how things are can, properly understood, reveal certain actions as ones which the agent saw reason to perform, namely by rigorously connecting the conception and the conclusion that the agent has reasons to perform such actions. Grounds are therefore given for the claim that an agent's failure to see reason to perform such actions can be used to deny that he possesses the relevant conception. But there seems no reason to think that such an explicit connection can be generally made out in the case of moral reasons, nor, presumably, does McDowell think that it is necessary. A proper understanding of the conception will, on his view, simply lead us to see that, possessed of that conception, an agent would be motivated in a certain way and, hence, that if he lacks the relevant motivation he cannot possess the conception. Without the kind of detailed connexion offered by Nagel, though, one might claim that this was, in a particular case, a mere stipulation concerning what it was properly to understand the conception. Nagel himself accepts the more stringent requirement (*op. cit.* p.59) which may partly explain something we noted earlier about his views on prudence: that while intuitively he wants to connect susceptibility to prudential motivation with a conception the agent has of his own future, the actual connexion is made with a much more abstract conception of time. For one might suspect that no conception of the agent's future could in fact be connected, in such a manner, with acceptance of prudential reasons. Here, then, might be a second condition one wished to impose on claims that ascription of a conception of how things are might serve, on its own, to explain an agent's action, a condition met by Nagel's account of prudence, which one saw no reason to think could be met, in general, by such claims concerning virtuous behaviour.

I left a question hanging: why, for McDowell, was the outsider in the case of etiquette capable of seeing some actions responsive to the requirements of etiquette as non-hypothetically

commanded, while the analogous possibility was denied to the moral outsider? A suggestion might be this. There may be a tension within McDowell's account between two rather different views about the nature of the conceptions which non-hypothetically require certain actions; and two different ways in which these conceptions are not "available equally to people who are not swayed by them" (§7). On the one hand, the relevant conceptions are thought of as something analogous to perceptual states, and I suggested a possible reason for maintaining this position, namely to account for the failure to be able to represent verbally how, say, a virtuous agent might conceive of a particular situation. Where the conceptions were thought of in this way, then, they might be regarded as unavailable to one who saw no reason to act in the appropriate way in *two* senses. First, the outsider would simply not take things to be as the possessor of the conception would. Secondly, and more strongly, lacking the perceptual capacity yielding those states, which, on the present view, are the only way adequately to represent to oneself how the possessor of the conception takes things to be, the outsider has no access to the content of the relevant conception: he is not even in a position to appreciate, while rejecting, the view that things are as the possessor of the conception takes them to be. He is hence unable to see by what conception the actions in question might be non-hypothetically commanded. At other times, rather, the conceptions are thought of as exemplifying something thought of as a "world-view" which, despite the perceptual overtones of "view" would seem to suggest a set of rather general beliefs, more or less articulate or articulable, comparable in these respects, though contrasted with, those yielded by science. A person not holding such a view might then be thought able to have, to varying degrees, access to the content of the conception while not assenting to the claim that things were as the possessor of the conception took them to be. Hence he might be thought of as able to know by what conception the adherents were swayed, while not being so himself. If, then, in thinking of virtue the first picture were predominant, but in the remark following the discussion of etiquette, the second, the contrast would be explained. That is, in the first kind of case, of which morality might be an example, the outsider could not appreciate by what conceptions the adherents were non-hypothetically swayed, while in the

second kind of case, of which etiquette might be an example, the outsider could have this appreciation, though remaining himself unswayed. If there is anything in this suggestion of a contrast between two ways of thinking of the conceptions in question, the issue would be where, and why, McDowell found the different pictures appropriate. If the suggestion is simply misguided, then I remain puzzled concerning the treatment of the moral outsider, and its contrast with the remark following the discussion of etiquette. In either case, the view of the moral outsider seems too happy a result for morality. For it rules out the possibility that someone might know how the world is taken to be by those committed to morality but simply hold that they were mistaken in thinking that things were like that. One might think that a cognitivist account of morality ought not simply to rule out such a possibility.

To show that the requirements of morality need not be hypothetical imperatives would not, of course, be yet to show that they could not be. It would not be to show, that is, that a complete explanation of virtuous action, either in general or in the particular case, could not be given in which the motivating capacity of the moral consideration rested solely on a desire of the agent's. McDowell seems to hold that if one thought it possible that the requirements of morality were hypothetical imperatives in the present sense, one would be violating what he regards as Kant's fundamental aim, namely that of denying that "... the motivating capacity of moral considertions needs explaining from outside, in terms of desires which are not intrinsically moral." (§8) But even to espouse that aim need not in itself commit one to the view that one must explain the motivating capacity of moral considerations in McDowell's way, as resting on no desires at all. For it has not yet been shown that the only alternative to that is to explain moral motivation in terms of desires which are, *unarguably*, not intrinsically moral, say by being self-interested: recognizably, Mrs. Foot's earlier position. There would still seem to be open the present position of Mrs. Foot, namely, that of explaining moral motivation in terms of desires which are regarded as being intrinsically moral, desires such as that for the good of others. Certainly, in her description of such desires, she seems inclined to something like the converse of the mistake attributed by McDowell to Kant. (§8) For she seems to think that if an agent is given reason by his desires to

perform virtuous actions then the desires will, primarily, be for ends distinct from the actions themselves. Thus her primary characterisation of the honest man is as one who cares for honesty "for the sake of the good that honest dealings brings to men". ("Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives" *Philosophical Review* 81, 1972 p.314). She thus finds a *prima facie* difficulty concerning cases where no such good is expected. She has been rightly criticized for this attempt to reduce all moral considerations to matters concerning means to ends. Thus, for example, D. Z. Phillips ("In Search of the Moral 'Must': Mrs. Foot's Fugitive Thought", *Philosophical Quarterly*, 27, 1977, pp.154ff.) notes that moral considerations may centrally be concerned with the *character* of a man's actions and not simply with the end he was pursuing in performing it. But one could hold that moral motivation was grounded in desires—Mrs. Foot's fundamental claim—without thinking that such desires were always, or even typically, for certain distinctive moral ends, as opposed, say, to desires that one's actions should have a certain character.

To establish McDowell's, position, even granted the Kantian aim, would require that one show that any desires which we could regard as intrinsically moral could *only* be consequentially ascribed, and thus could not serve as the ground for the motivating capacity of moral considerations. I am very unsure about how this would be argued for, or whether McDowell takes himself to have done so. He suggests (§6) that actions motivated by independently intelligible desires (by which, I take it, he means intelligible independently of a distinctive conception of how things are) could not be expected to match exactly those of a virtuous agent. But this seems already to presuppose that we have accepted that a virtuous agent is one possessed of certain distinctive conceptions and not someone possessed of certain desires: plus the thought that these alternative possibilities would diverge in their behavioural outcome. Similarly, when he remarks, in the same section, that behaviour motivated by an independent desire would be, at best, a simulacrum of virtuous behaviour, this may be intended merely as a consequence of the suggested position, not as an argument for it. For it to be the basis for such an argument would require, perhaps, that we had a view of what, in an agent's thought, might constitute the difference between the two ways in which his conception of the

situation might weigh with him, a difference such that it was crucial to our notion of a virtuous agent that he had the thoughts associated with a conception's weighing with him non-hypothetically. The problem here would be to see what, for McDowell, such a difference might come to. For he remarks (§7) that for his position it would not matter if someone maintained that *all* reasons for action consisted merely of cognitive states of the agent, that is, that all actions were, in the present sense, non-hypothetically required. If this is not incompatible with McDowell's position, then acting on a categorical imperative cannot manifest itself in, for example, the agent's thought that he "has to" or "must" perform the action—a thought rejected by Mrs. Foot as perhaps no more than a reflection of our feelings about morality. For clearly we entertain no such thought about our actions in general. Nor, for the same reason, can it manifest itself in the *agent's* thinking that his seeing reason to perform the action was not conditional on his desires.