

The Nature of Inclination*

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According to the Kantian picture of action, our inclinations need not determine what we do. They influence us, but we have the capacity to decide, freely and rationally, whether or not to act on them.¹ This picture, though strongly associated with Kant's theory, is not exclusively Kantian. There are many rationalist theories according to which we have the capacity to choose, in light of reason, how to act in the face of inclination's influence. In framing the question of this article, I am starting from this general Kantian/rationalist picture of action, and I

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1. I could have described Kant's view another way. I could have said: "On the Kantian picture of action, inclinations alone cannot determine what we do; in every action, we necessarily choose whether or not to act on our inclinations." That Kant believes this is suggested by his "incorporation thesis" (Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen Wood [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 6:24; Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 40–41). This is the thesis that, in order to act on any incentive (whether rational or sensuous), I must freely incorporate it into my maxim. On this view, the will is complicit in every action, including action from inclination. I believe that Kant did hold this thesis, and I believe that it can be defended, but it is highly controversial. Resistance to it comes largely from the fact that it tends to assimilate impulsive and unreflective actions to deliberate, reflective ones. A defense of the incorporation thesis would have to address this problem. For my purposes in this article, I do not need to assume the incorporation thesis. I only need to assume the weaker thesis that we can take a step back from our inclinations and choose whether or not to act on them. This weaker thesis provides a less controversial starting point without compromising the substance of my argument. I am grateful to several readers, including Han van Weitmarchen and an anonymous reviewer at *Ethics*, for urging me to divorce my argument from the stronger thesis.

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am attempting as far as possible to be neutral with respect to the various ways of fleshing out the concepts of freedom and reason that are associated with it. My question is about the other concept, that of inclination. When I take a step back from my inclination for the purpose of deciding whether or not to act on it, what is it that I am stepping back from? What kind of thing is an inclination?

Pretheoretically, to be inclined is to be passively motivated. Inclinations are in this sense “passions.” But the very notion of passive motivation is paradoxical. Motivation is a form of self-movement. A strong gust of wind can move me, but it cannot motivate me. How, then, can there be a form of motivation with respect to which I am passive? What is my inclination, such that it is both my motivation and something with respect to which I am passive?

Before going further, let me make several clarificatory remarks about the concept of inclination I am employing.² While the notion of inclination is closest to what contemporary philosophers call “desire,” it is narrower than that. ‘Desire’ is usually used to refer to a generic motivational state in contrast to a generic cognitive state. This use of desire does not distinguish between those motivational states that exert an influence *on* the will and those that are states *of* the will. In Kant’s terminology, it does not distinguish between “pathological” motives, which have their source in our passive capacity for feeling, and “practical” motives, which have their source in our active capacity for reason.³ In Thomas Nagel’s terminology, it fails to distinguish between “unmotivated” desires, which arise independently of deliberation, and “motivated” desires, which arise through practical deliberation. As I will be using it, “inclination” refers to the first sort of motive in each pair.

Because it exerts an influence on the will, inclination is necessarily action-oriented. An inclination is, in the first instance, a motive to do something. I can have an inclination to drink a glass of gin, to run away from an angry mob, to buy a new car, or to organize my closet. As such, inclination is not the same as a pro-attitude toward an object. I can have a pro-attitude toward you, but this itself does not amount to an inclination except insofar as it motivates me to do specific things, for ex-

2. I am not claiming that this is precisely Kant’s notion of inclination, but I also do not think that he used that concept consistently throughout his work (see n. 5). Given the essentials of his theory, I think that he would have recognized the concept of inclination I describe here, and the questions relating to it, as valid. My hope is that Kantians and at least some non-Kantians will be able to do the same.

3. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4:399 and 413; *Critique of Practical Reason*, in Wood, *Practical Philosophy*, 5:20; *The Metaphysics of Morals*, in Wood, *Practical Philosophy*, 6:399. I take Kant’s distinction to be equivalent to Thomas Nagel’s distinction as it appears in his *The Possibility of Altruism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 29.

ample, to call you or to make time to see you. I can have a pro-attitude toward the state of affairs in which a meteor does not strike the earth, but unless I am in a position to do something about it, that attitude does not function as an inclination.⁴ Nor are inclinations necessarily pro-attitudes. They can involve aversion. Arguably, my inclination to run from an angry mob is best described as a kind of aversion rather than as an appetite, a desire, or a pro-attitude.⁵

Nor is inclination obviously the same as emotion. Most emotions are closely associated with, if not constituted by, inclinations. Fear, for example, normally involves an inclination to avoid the feared object. But other emotions, such as grief, are less clearly tied to inclinations. I leave it to others to clarify the precise relation between emotion and inclination as such.

In the foreground of much philosophical literature on desire are questions about whether desires have belief-like content and about how desires have satisfaction conditions, on analogy with truth conditions. These questions take their shape from an inquiry into the broad notion of desire, as a generic motivational state to be contrasted with a generic cognitive state. Because my interest is in the notion of inclination, my central concern is different. My aim is to show how inclination is similar to and different from volition. The resulting view may well have implications for the other debates, but it is developed in response to a different question.

In asking how inclination is similar to and different from volition, I am taking these concepts to have their home in the first-personal context of deliberation. I want to know how we have to conceive of wanting and willing, given the respective roles we attribute to them in the course of deliberation. As such, my aim is not to individuate mental states for the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena third-personally. The aim is to give an account of the relation between inclining and willing that could be illuminating to the agent who is engaged in both.

That agent has to be a creature of a certain kind, for the question

4. However, quite often hopes involving events beyond our control function as inclinations to do things that we fantasize will affect the outcome. The obvious examples are inclinations to act out of superstition, such as the inclination to wear a lucky shirt on the day of the Big Game. More common is the fantasized, perhaps unconscious, attempt to control events beyond our control, such as events in the past, by obsessively rehearsing things we could have done to make them turn out other than they did.

5. In the *Groundwork*, Kant uses the phrase "inclination or fear" as if inclination were a form of attraction to be contrasted with the aversion implicit in fear (Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:398; 401n, and 440). I don't think anything in his theory commits him to this, and in his later *Critique of Practical Reason* he characterizes both hope and fear as inclinations (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:74 and 147).

I am asking only arises for a creature capable of distinguishing in deliberation between her will and the inclination that influences it. One who is able to say “I want to” is already in such a position. To say “I want to” is already to make an implicit distinction between the will that is influenced and the inclination that is influencing. An infant’s cry is perhaps the precursor of “I want.” But an infant is not yet sufficiently reflective to distinguish, even implicitly, between her inclinations and her will.

Although the question I am asking is the agent’s question, it is not the everyday question that arises in response to inclination. In everyday life, the natural question I ask with respect to any given inclination is “Should I act on it?” My question is the somewhat more abstract one of how I am to conceive of my inclinations as such in the course of deliberating about them. Are my inclinations simply psychological events that I observe as I would internal weather?² Or are they my doings, the earliest stages of actions I have already undertaken but have not yet manifested in overt behavior? Is inclining something that happens to me, or is it something I do?

This way of framing the question allows me to map out the conceptual territory in a relatively straightforward way. In the first part of this article, I will argue that a theory of inclination has to navigate between two extremes, one of which assimilates inclination to an external happening and the other of which assimilates it to an exercise of will. I will then defend a middle way that has its roots in Plato and Aristotle and that is arguably compatible with Kant.⁶ Inclination, I will argue, issues from a distinctive “part of the soul”; it is the exercise of a subpersonal capacity that is both agential and nonrational.

I. THE EXTREME ANTI-RATIONALIST VIEW OF INCLINATION

The temptation to assimilate inclination either to a happening or to a doing stems from ordinary intuitions about inclination, some of which highlight our passivity in relation to inclination and some of which highlight our active contribution to it. Let me start with the former. Intuitively, inclinations are passions. We are passive with respect to them in at least three senses. First, inclinations seem to come to us unbidden, spontaneously, as if from without. Inclinations bubble up in us, seize us, wash over us, and assail us. Second, they are not directly responsive

6. My view echoes book 9 of Plato’s *Republic*, in which Plato describes the human individual as a hybrid of animal and human parts, whose “outer covering” makes him appear to be “a single creature, a human being” (Plato, *Republic*, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997], 588d). It also provides one way of interpreting Aristotle’s claim that the desiderative and emotional part of the soul is not strictly rational but “partakes of reason in a sense” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985], 1102b13–1103a).

to volition. We can have inclinations we wish we did not have, and we can lack inclinations we wish we had. In neither case can we change our inclinations simply by changing our minds. This does not mean we cannot change our inclinations at all. Exactly how we can is a further question, one that presupposes an answer to the question of this article. I will take it as a common intuition, though, that we cannot author our inclinations in the same direct way that we author our actions. A third, related sense in which we are passive with respect to inclination is that we normally don't hold ourselves responsible for having our inclinations in the same way that we hold ourselves responsible for acting on them. Perhaps there is some attenuated sense in which we are responsible for having our inclinations, but I want to leave that question open. For my purposes, the important intuition is simply that any responsibility we might have for our inclinations is different, and less direct, than our responsibility for our actions.

These intuitions support the idea that inclination stems from a source external to reason or will. I will call this idea "the anti-rationalist insight." Now it is natural to take this insight as the basis for what I will call "extreme anti-rationalism" with regard to inclination. Extreme anti-rationalism locates the motivational source of inclination in something wholly distinct from our agential capacities. Now, because I am starting from a broadly Kantian conception of our agential capacities, the view I am calling extreme anti-rationalism is a form of dualism. The claim is that our inclinations are causally determined, whereas we freely author our actions; inclination is the product of natural necessity, whereas actions are products of reason. It is important, then, not to confuse extreme anti-rationalism about inclination with the more familiar sort of Humeanism according to which desire and practical reason do not differ deeply in kind. As I will be using the term, "extreme anti-rationalism" refers to the dualist view, not the Humean view.

The attraction of extreme anti-rationalism is not hard to see. The conception of inclinations as effects of brute causal processes seems to capture the sense in which having an inclination to A involves feeling like Aing or having an urge to A, where that feeling is something that can assail us independently of our volition. It also seems to account for the ways in which we are passive with respect to our inclinations. If my inclinations are just effects of causal processes working through me, it is clear why I cannot be held responsible for having them and why I cannot change them simply by changing my mind. Despite this appeal, it is hard to find a well-developed exemplar of extreme anti-rationalism. Kant is sometimes caricatured as being one, but I believe his actual view is in line with the one I will be defending later in this article. In general, those who start from a Kantian/rationalist conception of volition tend not to flesh out their conceptions of inclination. When they do, it is

usually with the aim of defending a rationalist conception of inclination against what is taken to be a crude dispositionalist picture.⁷ But those who develop and advocate the dispositionalist picture in any detail tend to be full-blown empiricists, and, hence, they don't fit the model I am calling extreme anti-rationalism.⁸ For this reason, my discussion of extreme anti-rationalism will be indirect. I will first approach dispositionalism through the eyes of a rationalist critic, and then I will ask what the dispositionalist might say in response to his worries.

In his well-known paper "Putting Rationality in Its Place," Warren Quinn argues against the view that desires are properly construed as causal dispositions, unguided by rational thought. His stated target is a type of Humean, but it is a type of Humean who is like a dualist in that he does distinguish between desires and reasons. Unlike Hume himself, this Humean accepts that there are such things as reasons for action. In addition, he claims that desires are sources of reasons, in the sense that when we desire an end, we thereby have reason to promote that end. But he also conceives of desires dispositionally. So, on the view Quinn targets, desires are brute dispositions, unguided by rational thought, that nevertheless "rationalize" actions by giving us reason to take the actions that satisfy them.

Quinn presents his argument as an internal critique of this position. He attempts to show that the Humean cannot jointly hold both that desires are dispositions and that desires are sources of reasons to act so as to satisfy them. But he then goes beyond an internal critique of the Humean position. After making the negative claim that the Humean position is internally incoherent, he goes on to argue for a positive claim about how desires ought to be conceived. The argument is that, unless desires are conceived this way, they cannot rationalize action. Evidently, then, Quinn believes we have reasons independent of Humeanism to save the thesis that desires rationalize action. Our task is to figure out what Quinn means by this thesis, why he thinks it is worth vindicating, and why he thinks the dispositionalist view cannot vindicate it.

The core of Quinn's official argument is his example of a dispositional state characterized by nothing more than a tendency to turn on radios:

Suppose I am in a strange functional state that disposes me to turn

7. An exception is Ruth Chang's "Can Desires Provide Reasons for Action?" in *Reason and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Philip Pettit, Samuel Scheffler, and Michael Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 56–90. In that paper, Chang takes aim at extreme rationalist conceptions of desire. But her contrasting account of brute "feelings like it" is rather undeveloped.

8. For a succinct account of the dispositionalist conception of desire, see Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 113–16.

on radios that I see to be turned off. Given the perception that a radio in my vicinity is off, I try, all other things being equal, to get it turned on. Does this state rationalize my choices? Told nothing more than this, one may certainly doubt that it does. But in the case I am imagining, this is all there is to the state. I do not turn the radios on in order to hear music or get news. It is not that I have an inordinate appetite for entertainment or information. Indeed, I do not turn them on in order to *hear* anything. My disposition is, I am supposing, basic rather than instrumental. In this respect it is like the much more familiar basic dispositions to do philosophy or listen to music.⁹

Quinn argues that this dispositional state does not rationalize the actions it motivates, in the sense that it fails to generate “even a *prima facie* reason to turn on radios” and “does not make the act sensible.”¹⁰ What he seems to have in mind here is a very modest notion of rationalization. The point is not that the desire fails to justify the action from some objective point of view, but rather that it does not give the agent a perspective from which to see the action as worth doing, even in a minimal sense.

Quinn’s positive claim is that the only way to show that desires rationalize actions is by abandoning the dispositional account of desire in favor of what I will call (following Talbot Brewer) the “evaluative outlook” conception of inclination.¹¹ On this view, desires are evaluative perspectives on the world, perspectives that are shaped by the agent’s implicit evaluations of objects and actions as good or bad. As Quinn defines it, the notion of evaluation being employed here is quite broad. It encompasses not only explicit judgments of good and bad in moral and prudential senses but also judgments that the object in question is attractive or pleasant, which, Quinn argues, are evaluative rather than straightforwardly empirical judgments.¹² The claim is that desire can rationalize action only if it involves my seeing or thinking of the action as good in this broad sense.

Now there are several weaknesses in this argument. First, if Quinn’s diagnosis is correct, the sense of “rationalize” being employed in the argument is so weak as to not be distinctive of the kind of Humeanism he has in mind. The sense in which the radio man’s desire fails to

9. Warren Quinn, “Putting Rationality in Its Place,” in *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory*, ed. Rosalind Hursthouse, Gavin Lawrence, and Warren Quinn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 189–90.

10. *Ibid.*, 190.

11. Talbot Brewer, “Three Dogmas of Desire,” in *Values and Virtues: Aristotelianism in Contemporary Ethics*, ed. Timothy Chappell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 257–84. As will become clear later, Thomas Scanlon shares this conception.

12. Quinn, “Putting Rationality in Its Place,” 197.

rationalize his action is simply that it fails to give him a perspective from which to see the act of turning on radios as having any point. Now even a Kantian could agree with the claim that a desire (or, in my terminology, an inclination) has to rationalize action in this sense. This need not be interpreted as equivalent to the claim that desiring to A gives the agent a reason to A, or even a partial justification for Aing, if by that is meant that it gives him a reason or a justification from some more objective point of view. If the Humean is committed to that stronger claim, then Quinn's solution to his problem misses its target.

Second, it isn't clear that Quinn's solution is unavailable to the Humean. The dispositionalist is not committed to the view that just any disposition to act counts as a desire. Presumably the dispositions that count as desires are those that fulfill a set of narrower conditions. Hence, the dispositionalist could simply deny that the radio man's disposition, as Quinn has described it, is the kind of state that counts as a desire. David Copp and David Sobel mount this sort of defense in response to Quinn on behalf of the dispositionalist.¹³ They maintain that the tendency displayed by radio man is too "thin" to count as anything other than a bare impulse, like the impulse to blink. Desires, they claim, are relatively "thick" dispositions constituted not only by tendencies to act but also by tendencies to entertain certain thoughts, including the thought that "turning on radios would be pleasant." More might need to be said to distinguish a desire to turn on radios from, say, a psychological compulsion to turn on radios, but the point is simply that the sophisticated dispositionalist in principle has resources to distinguish between mere impulses, psychological compulsions, and desires.

This defense is sound as far as it goes. But I think that something more complicated is going on in the dialogue here. The dispositionalist is attempting to give necessary and sufficient conditions for attributing a desire to an agent from the third-person point of view. Copp and Sobel write: "We agree . . . that motivation by desire does not seem to the agent to be motivation by a disposition nor by a complex set of dispositions."¹⁴ But I think Quinn is making a point about how we have to conceive of our desires from the deliberative point of view, from the point of view of the agent who is influenced by them. Quinn writes: "That I am set up to head in a certain way cannot by itself rationalize my will's going along with the set-up. For that I need the *thought* that the direction in which I am psychologically pointed leads to something good (either in act or result), or takes me away from something bad."¹⁵

13. David Copp and David Sobel, "Desires, Motives, and Reasons: Scanlon's Rationalistic Moral Psychology," *Social Theory and Practice* 28 (2002): 243–76.

14. *Ibid.*, 269.

15. Quinn, "Putting Rationality in Its Place," 195.

Quinn's challenge is posed from the standpoint of one who is under the influence of inclination and who is sufficiently reflective so as to distinguish between his inclination and his capacity for choice. If this is right, then the dispositionalist and Quinn may simply be talking past one another. The dispositionalist grants that desires don't appear to be dispositions from the agent's point of view. He would also grant that what Quinn calls "my will" doesn't appear to be a disposition from the agent's point of view, but he would nevertheless claim that it is possible to give a dispositional account of it.¹⁶ Quinn does not explicitly argue against this methodology, but the methodology he adopts is different. His claim is that, when I am influenced by desire from the deliberative standpoint, I cannot simply regard it as a dispositional tendency. Why not?

It is one thing to claim that, from the deliberative standpoint, it is impossible to conceive of my will as a mere disposition; it is another to deny that I can conceive of my inclination that way. I can't conceive of my will as a mere disposition when I am engaged in deliberation because it is a presupposition of that activity that my actions are up to me and that I can determine myself freely, according to what I see as the best reasons. This presupposition holds regardless of whatever tendencies I have displayed in the past or will display to a third-person observer when I act in this case. But insofar as my inclination presents itself to me, in the deliberative standpoint, as something independent of my will, why can't I conceive of it as a mere disposition?

According to Quinn, were I to conceive of my desires as dispositions, they would no more rationalize my actions than would a disposition to sneeze rationalize my sneezing.¹⁷ By this, I take it Quinn means that my desires would not give me a perspective from which to see the point of acting on them. But why isn't this argument diffused by thickening the relevant disposition so as to include evaluative thoughts? The disposition that counts as 'desiring to eat some coffee ice cream' no doubt differs from the disposition to sneeze when allergens are present because the former motivates by way of my thoughts while the latter doesn't. So why can't I, from the deliberative point of view, regard my desire to eat coffee ice cream as a complex disposition involving certain patterns of evaluative thought?

Quinn does not explicitly address this question, but I think he needs to answer it, and I will try to offer an answer on his behalf. Suppose I

16. Copp and Sobel argue that the Humean can give a dispositionalist account of rationality as well as of desire (Copp and Sobel, "Desires, Motives, and Reasons," 251).

17. Quinn, "Putting Rationality in Its Place," 198.

feel like eating some coffee ice cream.¹⁸ And suppose I understand that desires are complex dispositions. I understand that, in having this desire, I am displaying a tendency, for example, to be assailed by thoughts of the pleasure of eating coffee ice cream and to experience certain physiological effects in response to these thoughts. Now let's suppose that I take up the deliberative point of view while still regarding my desire as a disposition of this sort. What, if anything, goes wrong?

If I really am viewing my desire as a disposition, then I am not occupying it as an evaluative outlook. I am not deliberating about whether to eat some coffee ice cream from the perspective of one who sees doing so as pleasant. Rather, I am outside that perspective, observing myself having that pattern of thought. As such, it is not even clear what the deliberative question is. I am simply observing a feature of my circumstance as I might observe any other feature of my circumstance. Perhaps I could ask whether having this disposition counts as evidence of any other fact that might be relevant to determining what reasons apply to me. It might be the case that, when I display this sort of disposition, my hormones tend to be imbalanced. Or it might be the case that I tend to crave coffee ice cream when I am subconsciously trying to procrastinate working on a project. It also might be the case that my having this disposition is simply evidence that I would be likely to enjoy the experience of eating some. Some of these facts might be grounds for concluding that it would make sense for me to eat coffee ice cream, while others might be grounds for concluding that it wouldn't. By the same token, some of these facts might be grounds for concluding that it would make sense for me to perform some other action having nothing to do with eating coffee ice cream, like taking a hormone pill. The point is that, on this picture, there is no necessary connection between my wanting to eat some coffee ice cream and my having a perspective from which it makes sense for me to do so. More fundamentally, there is no necessary connection between my wanting to eat some coffee ice cream and my raising the question "Should I eat some?"

While Quinn's aim is to vindicate the thesis that acting on my desires necessarily makes some kind of sense to me, he actually vindicates a

18. I take this example from Thomas Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 44–45. As will become clear in the next section, Scanlon's official view is extreme rationalism, not extreme anti-rationalism. But this is one point in his text where he imagines the agent taking an external perspective on his desires, regarding them as facts among others to be taken into account in determining what reasons he has. Copp and Sobel share my discomfort with Scanlon's description of the agent's point of view in this example, but their objection is rather undeveloped: "When I say 'I would like some ice cream' and head to the freezer, I am expressing my desire and acting on it, not reporting a hypothesis about enjoyment that I have formed on the basis of noticing my desire" (Copp and Sobel, "Desires, Motives, and Reasons," 271).

more fundamental thesis. He vindicates the thesis that desires are the kinds of things we can act on. If my desire is merely an observed fact, a feature of my practical circumstance, I can take it into account in deciding what to do. But I cannot act on it as I would a proposal or a demand or a suggestion. Facts and proposals play distinct and mutually exclusive roles in deliberation. A fact contributes to determining what my circumstances are; a proposal attempts to tell me what to do given my circumstances. Our most fundamental notions about desire's influence on the will depend on the idea that it plays the role of a proposal. It is not just that we think of desires as things we can act on. We also think of desires as things that we can satisfy by acting on them. But the very notion of satisfying our desires makes no sense if we regard our desires simply as events. Neither does the idea that desire can conflict with reason. Reason cannot govern events, nor can it come into conflict with them. The source of the intuition that desire and reason can conflict comes from taking desires as proposals about what to do. If our desires propose or demand or suggest that we do certain things, then they at least appear to be in the same business as practical reason, namely, that of governing our actions.

The implications of dispositionalism, when regarded as a thesis about how we should conceive of our desires from the deliberative perspective, are thus quite radical. What we would have to give up is not simply the thesis that desires make sense of actions based on them but also the more fundamental conception of desires as proposals that we can act on, satisfy, and side with. In assimilating desires to happenings, dispositionalism overlooks the fact that desires don't simply move us; they bid us to act.

II. THE EXTREME RATIONALIST VIEW OF INCLINATION

These considerations provide the deepest reasons to reject an extreme anti-rationalist conception of inclination. The question is how far to go in the other direction. As I have laid out the continuum, the extreme opposite view would be a form of monism that assimilates inclination to an exercise of will or practical reason. Opponents of anti-rationalism tend to move in this direction by emphasizing the similarity between the form of motivation involved in inclination and that involved in volition. As we have seen, Quinn holds that desire, like volition, is necessarily guided by the agent's evaluative outlook. Thomas Scanlon continues this line of thought in his book, *What We Owe to Each Other*.¹⁹

19. Scanlon, *What We Owe*, 37–41. My focus in this article will be limited to the short section of Scanlon's book entitled "Reasons and Desires: Motivation." I will not consider Scanlon's further views about the justificatory role of desire because that would take me beyond the scope of my primary question.

Scanlon's view is a variation on Quinn's in that it takes the notion of a reason for action, rather than that of goodness, as the primary normative notion. On Scanlon's view, having a desire to A essentially involves taking certain considerations as reasons to A. Having a desire to buy a new computer, for example, involves taking certain considerations (e.g., that new computers look good, that they have useful features) as reasons to buy a new computer.²⁰ Thirst, Scanlon claims, involves seeing certain considerations (e.g., that my throat is uncomfortably dry, that a cool drink would relieve that discomfort) as reasons to drink.²¹

Scanlon intends this account to be true of all desires, whether practical or pathological, motivated or unmotivated. Unlike Hume, who argued that reason alone cannot motivate, Scanlon argues, in effect, that passion alone cannot motivate. His claim is that the motivational force behind all action comes from the agent's taking-something-as-a-reason-to-act. Now Kantians and some rationalists might agree with this as an account of the motivational force of those desires that are generated through practical reasoning. But it is a further question whether they would agree with it as an account of the motivational force of the desires that purport to bubble up spontaneously. The question, in Kant's terms, is whether Scanlon's view assimilates all pathological motives to practical ones.

Scanlon is aware that the challenge for his theory is to show that it accounts for what we intuitively think of as the spontaneous form of desire. He confronts one aspect of this worry in the following passage:

Having what is generally called a desire involves having a tendency to see something as a reason. Even if this is true, however, this is not all that desire involves. Having a desire to do something (such as to drink a glass of water) is not just a matter of seeing something good about it. I might see something good about drinking a glass of foul-tasting medicine, but would not therefore be said to have a desire to do so, and I can even see that something would be pleasant without, in the normal sense, feeling a desire to do it.²²

The notion of desire that Scanlon is referring to here is the narrow notion. If it were the broad notion of desire, he would have to be interpreted as making the Humean point that reason alone cannot motivate. But Scanlon does not believe this. He would not deny that seeing something good about drinking a glass of foul-tasting medicine is sufficient to motivate action. The question is how that kind of motive is related to the kind of desire that at least purports to have a life independent of the will.

Scanlon's response is to account for what appears to be a difference

20. *Ibid.*, 43.

21. *Ibid.*, 38.

22. *Ibid.*, 39. Compare Quinn, "Putting Rationality in Its Place," 203–4.

in kind in terms of a difference in degree. Instead of saying that pathological desires differ from practical desires in being motivated by a noncognitive rather than (or in addition to) a cognitive attitude, he claims that they differ in being motivated by a more rather than a less “insistent” evaluative outlook: “Reflection on the differences between these cases leads me to what I will call the idea of desire in the directed-attention sense. A person has a desire in the directed-attention sense that P if the thought of P keeps occurring to him or her in a favorable light, that is to say, if the person’s attention is directed insistently toward considerations that present themselves as counting in favor of P.”²³

According to Scanlon, desire in the pathological sense consists in being motivated insistently by the thought of certain considerations as reasons, as opposed to simply judging or seeing certain considerations as reasons in a noninsistent way. Indeed, Scanlon maintains, it is a mistake to take the felt difference between pathological and practical motivation to mark a difference in kind:

We should not take “desires” to be a special source of motivation, independent of our seeing things as reasons . . . when a person does have desire in the directed-attention sense and acts accordingly, what supplies the motive for this action is the agent’s perception of some consideration as a reason, not some additional element of “desire.” Desire in the directed-attention sense characterizes an important form of variability in the motivational efficacy of reasons, but it does this by describing one way in which the thought of something as a reason can present itself rather than by identifying a motivating factor that is independent of such a thought.²⁴

It is in virtue of this claim that I consider Scanlon’s position to be a version of what I want to call “extreme rationalism.”²⁵ Extreme rationalism starts from the main rationalist insight, namely, that inclination engages us as agents. It then takes this insight to imply that inclination engages us as full-fledged rational agents. In particular, extreme rationalism denies the Platonic and Aristotelian view that there are agential parts of the soul in any philosophically deep sense. It denies that there are distinctively passive and active motivational capacities, each making a different contribution to action. Instead, extreme rationalism holds that the soul is unitary, in the sense that agency involves the exercise of one rational capacity. This capacity can generate the appearance that it is

23. Scanlon, *What We Owe*, 39.

24. *Ibid.*, 40.

25. Quinn may or may not embrace extreme rationalism. His position, as presented in the paper I have been discussing, is not sufficiently developed to distinguish clearly between extreme rationalism and other views.

limited by another, but this only because it can be exercised with varying degrees of “insistence,” accuracy, clarity, and the like.

Can extreme rationalism account for the intuitions that drive anti-rationalism, intuitions about our passivity with respect to pathological desire? Another place Scanlon attempts to show that it can is in discussion of recalcitrant desires (“irrational thoughts”) and akrasia. These phenomena seem to involve conflict between distinct motivational sources. How are we to account for them on a theory in which the soul is unitary? One way is to claim that what appears to be conflict is in fact vascillation: when I feel tempted to reach for the cigarette against my better judgment, I am in fact vascillating between the judgment that I have reason to smoke the cigarette and the judgment that I do not have reason to smoke the cigarette.

Interestingly, Scanlon does not take this route. Instead, he refines his view, introducing a new distinction in kind, one that is purportedly shallower than the distinction he denies. Instead of simply claiming that we have one capacity to “take” considerations as reasons, Scanlon claims we have one capacity that can be exercised in two distinct ways. He writes: “Being a [rational] creature involves not only the capacity to make certain judgments and to be consistent about them, but also the ability to see certain considerations as reasons and to think of and see as reasons those things one has previously judged to be such.”²⁶ When desires seem to conflict with reason, as in cases of temptation and akrasia, what has happened is that our capacity to “see” reasons has become dissociated from our capacity to “judge” reasons. We judge that X is in fact not a reason to A, yet we persist in seeing X as if it were a reason to A. Scanlon writes: “Even if, for example, I have convinced myself that I should not be influenced by the approval or disapproval of a certain group, I may find myself wondering anxiously what they would think of something I am considering doing. When these thoughts occur, I may dismiss them immediately. Nonetheless, insofar as they involve (perhaps only momentarily) seeing something as a reason that I judge not to be one, they are instances of irrationality.”²⁷

Now, I should note that Scanlon is not entirely systematic in his subsequent use of the terms ‘seeing’ and ‘judging’. Later he writes that a desire in the directed-attention sense to buy a new computer “involves a tendency to judge that I have reason to buy a new computer.”²⁸ The slip raises the question of how much philosophical weight he actually puts on the distinction between seeing and judging. Still, Scanlon more often describes the experience of desire as one in which a certain con-

26. Scanlon, *What We Owe*, 40.

27. *Ibid.*, 40.

28. *Ibid.*, 43.

sideration simply “presents itself” to one’s mind as a consideration in favor of doing an action.²⁹ And he writes: “What I am claiming . . . is not that all desires arise from prior judgments but rather that having what is generally called a desire involves having a tendency to see something as a reason.”³⁰

The question now is whether, in positing a difference in kind between seeing and judging, Scanlon has in fact compromised his claim that desire and reason are not distinct motivational capacities. In making this distinction, Scanlon draws an implicit analogy between desire and perception.³¹ The analogy is powerful because the relation between perception and theoretical judgment is indeed in many respects analogous to the relation between desire and practical judgment. Perception purports to give us reasons to believe, and desire purports to give us reasons to act. Perception assails us spontaneously, as if from without, as does desire. Perception can conflict with and be recalcitrant to theoretical judgment, as when a stick in water appears bent even though we judge it to be straight. Similarly, desire can conflict with and be recalcitrant to practical judgment, as when a cigarette appears as good-to-smoke, even though we judge that it isn’t. Finally, in cases of conflict between perception and theoretical judgment, we think we ought to side with judgment. The same is true in cases of conflict between desire and practical judgment.

Because of these analogous relations, the claim that desiring is a kind of seeing has intuitive pull. But the explanatory value of the analogy is limited. Absent an independent theory of perception, it does not explain why perception exhibits the distinctive features that make it analogous to desire. What explains the fact that our perceptions can seem to assail us spontaneously and that they can be recalcitrant to reason? Why are we not responsible for our perceptions in the same way that we are responsible for our judgments? Is it because perception and theoretical judgment issue from distinct cognitive capacities? If so, in what sense are the capacities distinct? Is the distinction between

29. “Sometimes the pleasure of eating coffee ice cream keeps coming to mind, presenting itself as a reason for getting some now” and “I often choose one route rather than another . . . just because it is the alternative that presents itself as attractive at the time” (ibid., 44 and 47–48).

30. Ibid., 39.

31. This analogy comes up elsewhere in recent literature on desire and practical reason. See, e.g., Dennis Stampe, “The Authority of Desire,” *Philosophical Review* 96 (1987): 335–81; R. Jay Wallace, “Addiction as Defect of the Will: Some Philosophical Reflections,” *Law and Philosophy* 18 (1999): 621–54; Cheshire Calhoun, “Cognitive Emotions?” in *What Is an Emotion? Classic Readings in Philosophical Psychology*, ed. Robert C. Solomon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 236–47; Christine Tappolet, “Emotions and the Intelligibility of Akraic Action,” in *Weakness of Will and Practical Irrationality*, ed. Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003), 97–121.

perception and judgment a difference in kind or just one of degree (e.g., of insistence)?

I am not suggesting that the perceptual analogy is on the wrong track. My point is simply that the very questions at stake in Scanlon's discussion of desire can be raised with respect to perception. As such, the analogy alone does not give us insight into the nature of desire. All we have is a set of parallel intuitions. Indeed, we could just as easily run the analogy the other way. We could say that perception is a form of, or is analogous to, inclination. Perception is an inclination to believe, just as desire is an inclination to act. Without an independent theory of inclination, this wouldn't explain anything about perception.

To what extent, then, does Scanlon go beyond the appeal to analogy? We have seen that he holds (1) that the content of the mental state he calls "seeing" reasons differs from what he calls "judging" reasons only in the degree of insistence with which the considerations in favor of Aing "present themselves" to us and (2) that seeing and judging are fundamentally exercises of the same motivational capacity. In the next section, I will explain why I disagree with claim 1. For now I just want to point out that if Scanlon holds to claim 2, he needs to say more about how this is consistent with the idea that we are not responsible for having our desires in the same way that we are responsible for acting on them. If I am responsible for acting on my desires, this is presumably because my actions have their source in the seat of my agential authority, something identifiable with my proper or active self (whether we call this "will" or "reason" or "choice"). If, as Scanlon claims, my desires have the same source, then it would seem I should likewise regard them as exercises of my agential authority and that I should hold myself responsible simply for having them. Scanlon would, of course, reject this conclusion, but he needs to say more about why his theory does not commit him to it.

He does say at one point that what seeing and judging have in common is that the "motivational force of these states lies in a tendency to see some consideration as a *reason*."³² But we already know that both seeing and judging take reasons as their objects. The question is how the activities differ such that we are more directly responsible for the latter. Scanlon comes closest to addressing the responsibility issue when he writes that "neither of these tendencies [to see reasons and to judge reasons] is wholly under the control of a normal person."³³ If he were to add that seeing reasons is less in our control than judging reasons and that responsibility depends upon degrees of control, then perhaps he could begin to explain why we are less responsible for our desires

32. Scanlon, *What We Owe*, 40.

33. *Ibid.*, 40.

than our actions. But he would have to explain why seeing reasons is less in our control than judging reasons, given that it is an exercise of the very same capacity.

I mentioned earlier that the standard way for an extreme rationalist to account for recalcitrant desires and akrasia is to characterize it as a vacillation rather than as a conflict between distinct motivational sources. I also noted that Scanlon does not take this route, appealing instead to a distinction between “seeing” and “judging” reasons. The question is whether this distinction, were he to spell it out in detail, would compromise his claim that desire is not a distinct motivational source. If it would, then Scanlon would have to choose between his perceptual analogy account of recalcitrance and akrasia and his official commitment to a unitary picture of motivation (what I am calling “extreme rationalism”).

What would his picture look like were he to hold on to extreme rationalism? The most natural and consistent way to fill out the extreme rationalist view is to conceive of desire as a sort of hasty, unreliable act of judgment.³⁴ The difference between desire and reason, on this view, is a difference in degree. Reasoning and desiring are the same activity, but what we call ‘reasoning’ is a more deliberate and reliable exercise of this activity than ‘desiring’. One strength of this view over a non-cognitivist view of desire is that it would explain how desire and reason can interact, how desires can present claims suitable for direct evaluation on the basis of reason. For, on this view, to reflect on one’s desires is simply to double-check the hasty reasoning that led to the conclusions implicit in them.

But this rather straightforward version of extreme rationalism runs afoul of the worry about responsibility. There is no reason to think we should be less responsible for exercising our reason hastily than we are for exercising our reason carefully. That the judgments involved in our inclinations are hasty and unreliable might give us reason to reflect on them, to double-check them, as it were, but it does not give us an excuse for having made them.

Now, I am not suggesting that any extreme rationalist would willingly embrace this implication. However, it is not clear how he could escape it. The claim is that desiring and reasoning are at bottom exercises of the same capacity. Practical reason, insofar as it is the source of action, is the seat of agential authority. Hence, desires, too, must issue from the seat of agential authority. Extreme rationalism thus as-

34. Robert Solomon holds something like this view of emotions generally, namely, that they are modes of thought designed for “emergency” situations. Emotions, he writes, are “urgent judgments” (Robert Solomon, “Emotions and Choice,” in Solomon, *What Is an Emotion?* 224–35).

simulates desire to volition, and in doing so, it overlooks the fact that desires are not attributable to us in the same way that actions are.

III. INCLINATION AS ANIMAL ACTION

There are good philosophical reasons, then, to avoid both anti-rationalism and rationalism in their extreme forms. We want to avoid assimilating inclination to a happening, and we want to avoid assimilating it to a doing. The former approach holds that the distinction between inclination and will marks a difference in kind; the latter holds that it marks a difference in degree. Is there a middle way?

In this section I will argue that the way to avoid both extremes while preserving their respective insights is to distinguish between two agential capacities that jointly characterize us as human agents. One is a capacity to demand and offer justifications to ourselves and so to take considerations as reasons. The other is a more primitive capacity to see objects as calling for certain responses, independent of any justification. It is the latter capacity, I claim, that accounts for the motivational force of inclination.

Let me start by raising an objection to Scanlon's account of content of thoughts that motivate us when we are under the influence of inclination. Scanlon is right that his account of the motivating thought involved in inclination—the thought that X is a reason to A—implies extreme rationalism. But there are independent reasons to reject that account. I want to argue that Scanlon's account intellectualizes inclination, freighting it with a layer of reflection that it does not have, simply qua inclination. Suppose I am terribly thirsty. I have been hiking in the California hills on a hot summer day, and I have run out of water. My throat is painfully dry, and I am aching for a drink. I have lost the ability to enjoy my surroundings, and my mind is preoccupied with figuring out when and how I will be able to quench my thirst. Scanlon would claim that, in this situation, I am insistently seeing the dryness in my throat as reason to drink water and this is what is motivating me. But I contend that a more primitively normative thought could suffice to account for the content and motivational force of inclination. It is not that I am seeing the dryness in my throat as a reason to drink water but rather that I am seeing water as to-be-drunk.

This claim differs from Scanlon's in two respects. First, the content of this latter consciousness is not a statement of a purportedly normative fact.³⁵ It is not the thought that "water is to be drunk by someone," nor that "water is to be drunk by me." It is more like an imperative—"Drink!"

35. My view here is in sympathy with John Deigh's criticisms of certain cognitivist theories of emotion (John Deigh, "Cognitivism in the Theory of the Emotions," *Ethics*, 104 [1994]: 824–54).

or “Drink this!” or “Drink water!”³⁶ My thirst involves my seeing water in an imperatival mode, seeing it as “calling for” drinking or as “calling upon me” to drink it. Second, the salient normative thought is not that of a reason. It is more like a thought of obligation, law, or practical necessity. And yet it does not go so far as to involve this concept. Rather, it is an unreflective experience of practical necessity, an experience that does not involve consciousness of practical necessity as something that either has or requires justification. The thought is not “Drink! because . . .”; it is simply “Drink!”³⁷

An extreme rationalist would be skeptical of the suggestion that this “calling for” relation need not involve justificatory thought. For, if I see water as to-be-drunk, this must be in virtue of something, namely, in virtue of the thirst-quenching features of water to which my attention is insistently drawn. Shouldn’t I say, then, that this consciousness does in fact involve the recognition of grounds for drinking water and that its content is “Drink! because this has features that make it thirst-quenching”?

It is indeed true that thirst involves attention to the thirst-quenching features of water, rather than, say, to its slippery-making features. My claim is simply that thirst does not involve consciousness of the thirst-quenching features of water as grounds that justify the felt imperative to drink. Rather, it involves consciousness of these features as criteria for fulfilling a more basic imperative of which the imperative “Drink water!” is one specification. That more basic imperative is “Quench this thirst!” I am conscious of water as to-be-drunk because I am conscious of my thirst as to-be-quenched. The thirst-quenching features of water to which my attention is drawn don’t justify my acting on this more fundamental imperative; they merely show me a way of fulfilling it.

To get the flavor of what I have in mind, consider the way non-human animals are motivated to act. (I am only appealing to intuitions, here, although I think these intuitions can be defended more system-

36. Although imperatives figure centrally in my view, I reject the noncognitivism with which they are often associated. As a Kantian, I believe that imperatives, suitably expressed in the form of maxims, can be subject to rational assessment.

37. One might grant that particularly strong or urgent inclinations have this imperatival structure, while denying that weak ones do. Indeed the phenomenology of the experience of strong inclination is often different from that of weak inclination. Weak inclinations aren’t as overtly “demanding” as strong ones. It could be argued, then, that weak inclinations have the structure of proposals, rather than imperatives. On my view, all inclinations have an imperatival structure. I think this not simply because of phenomenology, but because I believe that all forms of agency, whether rational or nonrational, involve imperatives. To regard an inclination as a proposal is to take a further step, that of recognizing that the inclination does not have the authority it claims for itself, namely, the authority to dictate my conduct. To see an inclination as a proposal is an achievement requiring the work of reason. Admittedly I have not yet argued for this in detail. I am grateful to Sam Scheffler and Josh Cohen for pressing me on this.

atically.)³⁸ How does the world look to a cat? A cat's world, presumably, is teleologically organized around her needs and interests. The cat sees this scurrying mouse as to-be-chased, this food in the dish as to-be-eaten, and that big angry dog as to-be-avoided. When she is moved in light of her teleological consciousness, she is not simply subject to a causal disposition. The object does not force her to act in the way that pollen in the air might force her to sneeze. Rather, she sees the object as calling upon her to initiate movement in response to it. At least we have to think of her being motivated in something like this way insofar as we are committed to distinguishing between what she does and what happens to her.

Still, when the cat is motivated in this way, she does not see the demand to chase the mouse as something requiring justification. Indeed, she does not have the capacity to call her instincts into question (though she can expand their reach through learning).³⁹ So an answer to this justificatory question cannot even implicitly be part of her consciousness of the object. Analogously, I claim, when I have an inclination to reach for that piece of chocolate cake, the inclining part of me is "seeing" the cake as to-be-eaten. It is not also, even implicitly, asking or answering the question "On what grounds should a creature like me do this sort of thing under these sorts of circumstances?" Just as the cat lacks the capacity to call its instincts into question, so the inclining part of me lacks the capacity to call its motivating principles into question.

My contention, then, is that to "have an inclination" is to be aware of a part of me going for something in the way that a nonhuman animal goes for something. My inclination is the movement of my inner animal, a movement that would count as my action were I wholly a creature of instinct.

Now, again, the extreme rationalist might object that there is a tension between saying that the cat acts and saying that the cat does not act on reasons (or that it does not engage in justification). The worry is that insofar as we see the cat as an agent, we are committed to describing what she does in terms of all the concepts associated with human agency, including those of "justification" and "reason."⁴⁰ If we are serious about saying that the cat "acts," we have to also say that she "freely chooses" to act, and if we are serious about saying that she chooses to act, then we must claim that she does so on the basis of "reasons" that "justify" her

38. My intuitions about animal agency have been reinforced and elaborated by Christine Korsgaard's recent work on animal agency (Christine Korsgaard, "Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and Our Duties to Animals," in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 25, ed. Grethe B. Peterson [Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 2005], 79–110, esp. sec. 2; this is also available at <http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu>).

39. *Ibid.*, sec. 2.

40. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer at *Ethics* for pressing this objection.

choice. If this is right, then animal agency must have all the basic features of human agency, at least in some primitive form. Animal agency might well be less clearly articulated than human agency, and so different in degree, but it cannot be different in its basic structure.

My view relies on there being a difference in structure here. The difference lies in the fact that the cat cannot gain reflective distance on its own instinctively motivated activity, whereas human beings can. The cat is conscious, but it is not in this sense self-conscious.⁴¹ It can form an evaluative conception of the world in light of which it can *guide* itself toward what pleases or interests or satisfies it, but it cannot form a normative conception of itself in relation to the world, in light of which it can *govern* itself with respect to these objects. What I mean by this is that the cat cannot form an ideal of how “a creature like me” ought to conduct itself with respect to “the things that please or interest or satisfy me”; it cannot form a conception of itself that it can uphold or betray by acting in one way or another.⁴² Arguably this underlies the deepest difference in our conceptions of nonhuman and human animals, which is that nonhuman animals cannot hold themselves or be held accountable for what they do, whereas human animals can.

This might seem to imply only that nonhuman animals cannot engage in moral justification and cannot act on moral reasons, while leaving open the possibility that they can engage, at least implicitly, in other sorts of justification and act on other sorts of reasons. But I would argue that these capacities, the capacity to engage in justification and the capacity for moral accountability, are indeed continuous. Justification is a form of address—to another or to oneself-regarded-as-another. Its aim is to show that the action in question is grounded in principles that both addressee and addressor could freely accept and to which they could hold themselves and one another accountable.⁴³ In order to engage in this kind of address, one arguably has to be self-conscious in the sense I just described. Since merely conscious creatures lack the capacity for such self-consciousness, it is sheer anthropomorphism to see them as engaged, even implicitly, in justification. Merely conscious creatures are agents who can and must guide themselves through the world, but this does not imply either that they can or that they must justify themselves to one another.

41. Korsgaard uses the “conscious”/“self-conscious” distinction in her account of animal agency (Korsgaard, “Fellow Creatures,” sec. 2). The guidance/governance distinction is mine.

42. I approach the distinction between goal-guided and ideal-governed action from a different direction in my “Three Conceptions of Action in Moral Theory,” *Noûs* 35 (2001): 93–117.

43. See Stephen Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Now this is not an article on the nature of animal agency, and I cannot here fully defend the view that there is this difference in kind between animal and human agency. My aim is to say enough in defense of the view to motivate my conception of inclination. That conception does not depend directly on any claim about nonhuman animals *per se*. It simply depends on the claim that there is conceptual room for a distinct kind of agency that does not presuppose justificatory capacities and that this kind of agency plausibly characterizes human inclination as seen from the perspective of one who experiences it. I am going to call this kind of agency “object-based” in contrast with “principle-based” agency. While the claim that animal agency is object-based provides an intuitive way into my conception of inclination, my fundamental claim is that inclination has the structure of object-based agency. Hence, my position would not be undermined directly if it turned out that animal agency does not exemplify object-based agency. Still, it would not be implausible to think that our capacity to be inclined is evolutionarily related to agential capacities we share with nonhuman animals. In addition, the association of inclination with animal agency lends support to the everyday idea that to act out of inclination is to “act like an animal.”

The examples I have offered so far have involved inclinations stemming rather directly from our biological nature, ones we share with many nonhuman animals. But I do not want to suggest that the only possible objects of human inclination are those that are also objects of animal action. The point is that the mode of agency involved is the same; the objects can, of course, be different. Human beings can be inclined to do a whole range of things that nonhuman animals simply could not be motivated to do. Let me illustrate with a different example. Suppose I want to check my e-mail. Part of this motive might be practical rather than pathological. It might involve the thought that I ought to check my e-mail because I am involved in an important negotiation and I risk losing out if I don't keep in touch in a timely manner. I will set that practical motive aside. The pathological part of the motive, the inclination, is simply an urge to check my mail. On my view, this motive involves my consciousness of something like an imperative, “Check e-mail!” Moreover, in experiencing the normative pull of this imperative, I attend to the features of e-mail that make it appealing to me. Suppose that, in my case, the appealing feature of e-mail is not its usefulness as a professional tool but rather its effectiveness at keeping me in contact with family and friends. If this is the feature of e-mail that I attend to in having the inclination to check it, then my underlying felt imperative may be something like “Stay connected with friends and family!” My inclination to check e-mail is an urge to do so as a way of staying connected with friends and family. Now, in order to be influenced in this

way, do I need to be conceived of as offering myself, even implicitly, a justification for staying connected with friends and family? No. The felt need to stay in touch, like the felt need to quench my thirst, is guiding the inclining part of me in the way that instinct guides an animal.⁴⁴

A similar story can be told about the range of inclinations that shape my personal tastes and interests. Suppose I feel like listening to my current favorite piece of music. Again, assuming this motive is not the result of prior practical reasoning (e.g., I ought to listen to this song because doing so would make my friend happy), it simply involves my consciousness of this piece as to-be-listened-to. Indeed, I might say that I want to drink this piece of music in through my ears. Insofar as this statement makes sense, it is because the inclination involved shares the same structure with thirst. My inclination to listen to the music is no more laden with justificatory thought than is my inclination to drink water when thirsty. This is not to take a position on the question whether judgments of taste can in principle be justified. The point is simply that inclinations based on taste do not have to involve justificatory thought in order to have motivational influence.

I have claimed that having an inclination involves having and being motivationally responsive to an imperatival conception of an object and that this does not involve the further thought of a justification for responding as the imperative directs. This amounts to a rejection of Scanlon's view of desire because, on that view, desire involves taking a consideration as a reason to act. But does it amount to a rejection of Quinn's view, which claimed that the desire necessarily involves some conception of the object as good? Recall that, according to Quinn, my desire has to involve my evaluation of an object as good in a broad sense (as worthwhile, desirable, attractive, pleasant, etc.). If it didn't, it wouldn't necessarily provide me with a perspective from which to see the action on the desire as having any point. Now Quinn might object that, on my view, inclination fails to rationalize the response it motivates because, in being inclined, I simply find myself responding to imperatives I cannot justify. Why don't these imperatives seem arbitrary from my point of view, and why don't my motivational responses to them seem pointless to me?⁴⁵

A way of getting at the issue here is to ask what my view would say about Quinn's example of the disposition to turn on radios. Suppose I find myself inclined to turn on every radio I see. On my theory, this means that I see every radio that is off as to-be-turned-on. I have an

44. I don't mean to be suggesting here that this need is specifically human. Many kinds of nonhuman animals need and thrive on affective bonds with other individuals.

45. I am grateful to both Agnes Callard and an anonymous reviewer at *Ethics* for urging me to address this objection.

imperatival conception of such radios, and at least part of me is motivationally responsive to this conception. Do I need to have the further thought that turning on radios is in some way good? If not, then how is the motivation I have described any more intelligible to me than, say, my disposition to squint in bright sunlight?

When I squint in bright sunlight, I do not do so in response to an imperatival conception of anything. I do not see the sun as to-be-squinted-at or sunlight as to-be-squinted-in. I do not have an inclination to squint and then act on that inclination. Rather, I squint by reflex. So, on my theory, my inclination to turn on radios is not assimilable to a reflex. But it might still seem objectionably arbitrary. Suppose all the objects in my world have little labels on them telling me what I ought to do in response to them. My bed says "to-be-slept-in," and my chair says "to-be-sat-upon." All the radios say "to-be-turned-on." If my account is interpreted as claiming that having an inclination is like following the instructions on these labels for no reason, then it will run afoul of Quinn's worry. The motivation will make no sense to me from the inside.

To rule out this caricature, I have to flesh out the details of my theory in a bit more detail. I have already said that, on my view, inclination involves seeing an object in an imperatival way. This is different from seeing the object and then seeing an imperative attached to the object. When I am inclined, my attention is necessarily drawn to certain features of the object that appear to me as practically salient. If I have an inclination to turn on radios, this must involve seeing radios as to-be-turned-on in virtue of certain features of radios and of the action. Part of what makes the disposition that Quinn describes seem unintelligible is that it does not specify any features as practically salient from the perspective of one who has this disposition. On my view, it must be possible to specify such features if the motive is to count as an inclination. Let's suppose that seeing a radio in the off position simply generates a brute, unanalyzable feeling of psychological discomfort in me; I experience turned-off radios as something like mental itches I have to scratch. On the theory I have been defending, this is sufficient for the impulse to count as an inclination. It counts as an inclination because it is the kind of impulse that can exert an influence on my will. It is no doubt less intelligible to us than other inclinations because it is uncommon and because there is no familiar physiological mechanism underlying it, but that does not disqualify it as an inclination.

This is not inconsistent with Quinn's view. To see an off radio as a mental itch is to see it in terms of pain or discomfort and, according to Quinn, pain and pleasure are primitive evaluative notions, primitive notions of bad and good. I agree with this view of pleasure and pain, though I cannot argue the point here. Now, I am willing to grant that, when I am inclined, I necessarily see a certain action as to-be-done in

virtue of features that make doing it look good to me. Some version of the “guise of the good” thesis does characterize object-based agency. But, again, this does not mean that I see the goodness of those features as justifying my doing the action. What it means is that looking-good-to-me functions as the basic criteria any action must fill in order for it to appear to me as to-be-done. In other words, each of my inclinations manifests my inclining self’s responsiveness to a basic imperative to seek my apparent good and to shun my apparent bad. This is consistent with the analogy to animal action, because creatures of instinct characteristically act in light of what their sense of their weal and woe. If my inclining self weren’t in general sensitive to something I see as my weal and woe, no actions would spontaneously appear to me as to-be-done. But this does not imply either that the primitive concept of goodness is prior to the primitive concept of practical necessity or vice versa. The two stand and fall together. My inclining self cannot be conscious of anything as to-be-sought without conceiving of it as good, and it cannot be conscious of anything as good without conceiving of it as to-be-sought.

IV. IMPLICATIONS OF THE THEORY

The view of inclination as stemming from our capacity for nonrational agency can account for the features of inclination that caused problems for both extreme anti-rationalists and extreme rationalists. Recall that the main problem for the extreme anti-rationalist was to explain the distinctive role inclination plays in deliberation. In ordinary deliberation, inclinations do not present themselves as features of our circumstance, as on par with the weather. Rather, they present themselves as demands or proposals or suggestions about what to do given our circumstances. On my view, having an inclination involves having an imperatival conception of an object. As such, the consciousness involved in inclination purports to direct us, to tell us what to do. This is why it is something we can act on, satisfy, and side with.

The main challenge for the extreme rationalist was to explain the various ways in which we are passive with respect to our inclinations. One aspect of this challenge was to explain how inclination can conflict with reason. Now notice that conflict requires both similarity and difference. Extreme anti-rationalism cannot account for conflict between inclination and reason because it assimilates inclination to a happening rather than a mode of government. Extreme rationalism assimilates inclination to a mode of government indistinguishable in kind from reasoning, and so it cannot account for the duality necessary for genuine conflict. On my view, inclination and reason are similar to and different from one another in ways that make conflict possible. They are both in the business of governing action, and as such they can issue conflicting claims about what to do. But they are different modes of government,

which presuppose different agential capacities. Our inclination addresses us as nonrational animals subject to the dictatorial authority of instinct. Our reason addresses us as free beings capable of autonomy. In this respect, they are two different motivational sources.

A related challenge is to explain how reason and inclination can conflict while still accounting for the recalcitrance of inclination. These features of the relation between inclination and reason are in tension with one another. To the extent that reason and inclination can come into direct conflict, they must be in the same business. But to the extent that inclination, by its very nature, is not directly responsive to volition, the two have to be operating according to different principles. I noted earlier that one of the intuitions that drives anti-rationalism is the intuition that I cannot change my inclinations simply by changing my mind. Now the extreme rationalist might agree with this, while saying that, to the extent that I can't change my inclinations by changing my mind, I am simply being obtuse. For if my inclinations are just my hasty, unreliable acts of judgment, then I should be able to change them simply by making more careful, reliable judgments. So long as I am rational, I should in principle be able to cultivate my inclinations through strictly rational means.

Part of why the perceptual analogy is compelling is that it puts the lie to this way of thinking. I may be perfectly rational and still see the stick in the water as bent even though I judge it to be straight. I may be perfectly rational and still feel a rush of fear when riding the roller coaster, even though I judge that I am completely safe. My account provides an explanation for why the latter situation is both one of motivational conflict and one of recalcitrance for which I am not at fault. The part of me that experiences the fear (which, for my purposes, we can construe as an inclination to flee the situation) is what I have called my "inner animal." The part of me that judges that I am safe (and so tells me I can stay put) is what I will call my "outer human." The situation counts as a motivational conflict because my inner animal tells me to flee while my outer human tells me to stay put. It also illustrates the recalcitrance of inclination, because my inner animal's way of seeing and responding to the situation does not change simply because my outer human has judged the situation differently. But this recalcitrance does not stem from obtuseness on my part. My inner animal simply is not capable of seeing the situation in exactly the same terms that my outer human sees it. Although it sees the situation as to-be-fled, it does not see it as to-be-fled-for-a-reason, and so it cannot be corrected simply by being shown a stronger reason to stay put. Now, again, in saying that my inner animal does not see the situation as to-be-fled-for-a-reason, I am not denying that it sees the situation as to-be-fled in virtue of specific features of the roller coaster ride, in this case its life-threatening features

rather than, say, its noisy features. But this is just to say that my inner animal is responding to a more fundamental imperative, “Preserve my life!” in light of which it sees the situation.

At this point, the extreme rationalist might object. When I’m standing in line for the roller coaster, I may well try to talk myself out of the fear I’m feeling. But if inclinations are simply not responsive to reason, why would doing this make any more sense than trying to talk myself out of indigestion? Even Aristotle, who was certainly not an extreme rationalist, held that the irrational part of the soul “listens to” and “is in some sense persuaded by” the rational part.⁴⁶ But the neo-Aristotelian picture that I have defended thus far does not explain how this is possible. How do we account for the fact that talking to oneself can be an effective way to try to manage one’s inclinations if the inclining part of the soul is by definition not capable of engaging in rational dialogue about what to do?

My reply has two parts. First, I assume that my inner animal’s consciousness is capable of making associative connections. In the roller coaster case, my inner animal’s tendency to see roller coasters as life-threatening is not the product of its having gathered and assessed evidence in a rational way. It has, by nonrational processes, come to see roller coasters as fragile, rickety, and unreliable. Now, my rational part can, by assessing the evidence, come to judge that roller coasters are not, in fact, unreliable. But for this knowledge to shape my inclinations, I need something more than rationality. I need to forge new associative connections, perhaps through the exercise of my imagination. I have to come to see roller coasters as solid, supportive, and trustworthy. Sometimes when I try to talk myself out of my fear, what I am doing is attempting imaginatively to forge these new associative connections.

Second, when I am in the roller coaster line, what looks like an attempt to talk myself out of having my fear is often in fact an attempt to talk myself out of acting on my fear. I may be trying to reason with my rational part, the part that makes choices in the face of inclination.⁴⁷ Reminding myself of the evidence for thinking that roller coasters are safe can indeed help to keep my will from siding with my inclination. Moreover, by acting as if I am not afraid of roller coasters, I give myself the chance to have experiences that can help me generate and reinforce the associative connection I need to support my rationality, the connection between roller coasters and stability.

My account can thus explain both the sense in which inclinations are, by their very nature, recalcitrant to reason and the sense in which they are responsive to certain modes of conscious control that involve

46. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102b13–1103a.

47. Thanks to Jason Slavick for helping me formulate this part of the reply.

talking to ourselves. The final challenge is to explain why we are not responsible for having our inclinations in the same way that we are responsible for acting on them. The answer should by now be clear. While my inclinations are not simply happenings external to me, neither do they issue from the part of me that can be held directly accountable for what it does. The capacity in virtue of which I have inclinations lacks the freedom necessary for accountability. It is agential, but it is governed by laws it cannot question. Hence, my inner animal does not speak for me in the deep sense that my outer human does.

V. CONCLUSION

I have developed and defended a view according to which our capacity for inclination is both agential and nonrational. In developing this conception, I have tried to learn from the insights of both anti-rationalism and rationalism, without taking either to an extreme. The anti-rationalist insight is that inclinations stem from a motivational source distinct from reason or will. The rationalist insight is that inclination engages our agential capacities by motivating us on the basis of our evaluative outlooks. If inclination is the exercise of a capacity for nonrational agency, both of these insights can be true. On my view, our inclinations stem from a capacity for object-based agency, the form of agency that I suggest characterizes creatures of instinct. Object-based agency is consciously guided and so is not simply a way of being caused. But it is not rational in that it does not engage the capacity to raise and answer questions of justification. To be influenced by inclination, I conclude, is to be aware of a part of me—my inner animal, so to speak—going for something in the way that would count as my action were this part the whole of me.

Let me close by noting the limits of this argument. I have not yet addressed the question of how inclination and reason work together to generate action. Importantly, I have not yet said anything about whether inclination alone is sufficient to determine human action or whether it can only do so with the cooperation of the will. Nor have I attempted to explain how inclination provides input to deliberation and how reason takes up this input. And although I have attempted to provide an explanation of motivational conflicts where inclination is recalcitrant to reason, I have not attempted to give a theory of akratic action. My theory will have implications for all of these questions, but I assume that working them out is not trivial. Indeed, there is a tendency in philosophy of action to conflate claims about what is involved in having inclinations with claims about what is involved in acting on them. I have proceeded on the assumption that it is wise to address the first of these issues before turning to the second.