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Was Sally's reason for running from the bear that she thought it was chasing her?

Sally thinks she is being chased by a bear, and runs away. Let us suppose that running away makes sense in the circumstances.¹ It seems clear that her reason for running is that a bear is chasing her. But it also seems that her reason for running is that she *thinks* a bear is chasing her.² Indeed it is sometimes asserted that her real reason *cannot* be that a bear is chasing her, but must be merely that she thinks or believes that a bear is chasing her. For example, Michael Smith has argued as follows:

Given that an agent who has a motivating reason to ϕ is in a state that is in this way potentially explanatory of her ϕ -ing, it is then natural to suppose that her motivating reason is itself *psychologically real*. ... By contrast with normative reasons, then, which seem to be *truths* ... motivating reasons would seem to be *psychological states*, states that play a certain explanatory role in providing action. (Smith 1994, 96)

Now one question for this psychological sort of approach to reasons for action is what sort of thing the reason is supposed to be. Is it a psychological state, as Smith has it here – for example Sally's state of believing that a bear is chasing her? Or is it the fact that she is in this psychological state – the fact that she believes a bear is chasing her? And is *her belief* that a bear is chasing her the same thing as one of these or something else and perhaps a better candidate for being Sally's reason for running. Smith (1994) does not distinguish between the belief and the psychological state. And John Searle makes nothing of the distinction between the belief and the fact that the subject has that belief.

He claims (2001, 102) that ‘we can say either *the fact* that I believed it is the reason or *my belief* is the reason’. However Roger Crisp (2006, 38) is careful to say that my reason for acting is my belief but not my having that belief.

The advantage of thinking of Sally’s *belief* as her reason is that it seems to combine elements of both the fact that a bear is chasing her and the fact that she believes a bear is chasing her. Sally’s belief that a bear is chasing her has the same content as the fact that a bear is chasing her – the belief and the fact both are *that a bear is chasing her*. So one might think that they both justify her behaviour in the same way. At the same time it looks as though the belief is a better candidate for being her reason for running since it has that psychological element that Michael Smith is after. It seems that her belief that a bear is chasing her can both justify and explain her running.

But I think that the idea of Sally’s *belief* is metaphysically indeterminate in a way that gives the impression that it can have this dual role but really means that this impression is just a confusion. When we can say that Sally believes that a bear is chasing her we can then also say that she *has the belief* that a bear is chasing her. But saying that she has this belief is saying nothing more than that she believes it. There is no independently identifiable entity – her belief – that we can observe somehow in her possession and in virtue of which we say she has it. Talking of Sally’s beliefs is completely derivative from talking of what Sally believes.

Once we start talking about beliefs we can start to think about identity conditions for those beliefs. But there are several choices here none of which is really forced on us. If Sally and I share a belief that a bear is chasing her does that mean that there is just one belief here that is literally being shared? If so then it is not psychologically real in the

sense that Smith is after. If we say that there are two beliefs here – Sally’s and mine – what about their identity over time? Suppose Sally has a belief, stops having it, then believes exactly the same thing again. Does she have the same belief as she had before, or a different belief with the same content? Our talk of beliefs is not determinate with regard to these questions. (And nor I think is our talk of states of believing.)

Sally’s belief is a sort of hybrid between what she believes and the fact that she believes it. We might translate the phrase ‘Sally’s belief’ roughly as ‘what Sally believes being believed by Sally’. This can be true or false in line with whether what Sally believes is true or false but at the same time can explain things in line with whether the fact that Sally believes it explains these things.

Given this derivativeness and indeterminacy in the idea of Sally’s belief I will not consider it as a candidate for what her reason for running might be but consider just two other candidates, the second of which represents the psychological approach:

- (a) that she is being chased by a bear;
- (b) that she thinks/believes that she is being chased by a bear.

I will argue that there is a case against (b) being her reason for running away which is effective. The problem is that there also seems to be a pretty good case for thinking that (b) *is* her reason for running away. So we have an apparent contradiction. Sorting out this contradiction promises to provide some insight into the nature of reasons for action and the relationship between normative and motivating reasons.³

The first thing to consider is how the word ‘for’ is used in this context. As is often remarked, there are in fact at least two quite distinct uses corresponding respectively to the two phrases, ‘reason for an action’ and ‘acting for a reason’. We say that such and

such is a reason *for* Sally to run. We also say that Sally runs *for* such and such a reason. And these mean quite different things. So consider the following:

A. A reason for Sally to run is that such and such.

B. Sally runs for the reason that such and such.

In the first phrase, ‘reason for’ means something like ‘reason in favour of’; ‘for’ is the opposite of ‘against’ here. There could be a reason for, or in favour of, Sally running even if she does not run. Such reasons do not need to be explanatory, since there may be such reasons even when there is nothing to explain - e.g. when Sally does not run. A reason for Sally to run – one that favours her running – is often described as a normative reason. The existence of such reasons generates the possibility of Sally getting things right or wrong, succeeding or failing, acting correctly or making a mistake. We talk of reasons for action in order to set up norms for action.

Rüdiger Bittner (2001) however denies that such reasons are really normative at all; they are merely states of affairs to which actions might be responses. This connection between reasons and responses is remarked independently by others too - in particular Stoutland (1998). But although the English language is not definitive about this the notion of a response itself appears to be normative; it is precisely responses rather than reactions which we can describe as *appropriate* or *inappropriate*. This does not mean that it follows from Sally having a reason to run that she should run. But it does mean at the very least that there is a systematic way of determining appropriate and inappropriate responses - a way of deriving recommendations for her actions – which given the

reasons and in the absence of countervailing considerations yields the recommendation that she should run.

This makes room for the possibility that the system of deriving recommendations is a bad one. For example, consider a West Ham football club hooligan's system of justification, according to which someone's being a Chelsea supporter is a reason to attack them. There are different sorts of claims that can be made here. We could make the existential claim that there is some system of justification relative to which it is recommended that he attack the Chelsea fan. This would be a very weak claim to make however, since, if we allow bad systems of justification, then it would be true of just about every possible recommendation for action. Bittner takes reason-giving statements to be very weak existential claims of this sort.

We could also say however that *relative* to a certain system of justification – perhaps the West Ham hooligan's one – it is recommended that he attack the Chelsea fan. If we say of the hooligan that *he has* a reason to attack the Chelsea fan we may mean that according to his system of justification he has a reason to do so. Such a claim is *relatively* normative. I think that Bernard Williams (1981) is concerned with such claims in his discussion of internal and external reasons. If a reason is only a reason relative to the agent's system of justification then in a sense it is internal to that agent's motivational system.

The third sort of claim that might be made here is an absolutely normative one. Instead of making a claim about a system of justification, we might be endorsing a particular system of justification (say the hooligan's one) and making the absolute (and absolutely false) claim that attacking the fan is recommended. This sort of claim is

straightforwardly normative. Saying that *there is* a reason to attack the Chelsea fan sounds like an example of this sort of claim. That the fan is a Chelsea supporter is in fact no reason to attack him in this sense. I think Parfit (1997) and Dancy (2000) are thinking of this sort of claim when they describe reasons as both external and normative.

We can also use the phrase ‘reason for’ without any of these normative connotations. Consider the following:

A*. A reason for the water running out of the tank is that there is a leak in the tap.

There can be no such reason unless the water actually runs out of the tank, and there is no sense in which the water either succeeds or fails with respect to this reason. The fact that there is a leak in the tap *favours* the process of the water running out of the tank only in as much as we can infer that the water will run out of the tank from that fact. We can also say the following:

A**. A reason for the water to run out of the tank is that there is a leak in the tap.

To my ear at least there is an ambiguity in this sentence. On the one hand it might be used to state a possible explanation of something that may or may not happen. It is like A* but in a hypothetical mode. On the other hand the sentence might be used to express the absurd idea that the water might have a reason – a normative reason - for action. It is not difficult in any case to limit our use of the phrase ‘reason for’ to cases where what is

described is a normative reason, and keep formulations like A* and A** out of the picture.

In B on the other hand the reason is simply explanatory. If Sally runs for the reason that a bear is chasing her or that she thinks a bear is chasing her then the fact that a bear is chasing her or that she thinks a bear is chasing her explains her running. In this phrase, ‘for such and such a reason’ means something like ‘on account of such and such a reason’. It is an awkward kind of expression, and we would usually employ one of the following expressions instead: ‘Sally runs *because* a bear is chasing her;’ or ‘The reason why Sally run is that a bear is chasing her.’

The target of my argument here is a different construction – a combination of A and B.

C. Sally’s reason for running is that such and such.

This means that a reason for Sally to run is that such and such and she runs for that reason. The reason simultaneously favours and accounts for her running. It is both normative and explanatory; in this respect it is often described as a *motivating* reason. And it is this joint role that gives rise to the philosophical tension that I described at the start. The consideration that *favours* her running away appears to be that a bear is chasing her, not that she believes that a bear is chasing her. But the consideration that appears to *explain* her running away – at least according to the line of thought I am rejecting in this chapter - is that she believes a bear is chasing her rather than that a bear actually is chasing her.

Let me start with the question of whether the fact that Sally believes that a bear is chasing her is a (normative) reason for her to run away – whether the fact that she has that belief *favours* her running away. What can be accepted without much difficulty is that her having that belief makes her running away rationally intelligible. Learning that she thinks a bear is chasing her I can make sense of her running away; I can see that her behaviour is rational. But this does not in itself mean that the fact that she has that belief *favours* her running away. Learning that Sally has a pathological fear of furry animals makes her running away rationally intelligible; what she does makes sense in the light of her having this fear. But the fact that she has a fear of furry animals does not *favour* her running away; it is no reason for her to run away (assuming for the sake of argument that she is trying to fight this phobia rather than going with the flow).

We could say that the fact that she has a fear of furry animals is a reason *why* she runs away rather than a reason for running away. This distinction is made by several people in the literature including Darwall (1983, 29) and Dancy (2000, 5-6). Bernard Williams (1981) represents a classic source for this distinction. His example is someone putting tonic in a glass of petrol, thinking it is gin, and drinking it. Williams says that the man's desire for gin is not a reason for him to drink that liquid, but if his belief that it was gin had been true, that desire would have been a reason.⁴ Yet for the man who inadvertently drinks petrol 'we do not only have an explanation of his doing so (a reason *why* he did it), but we have such an explanation which is of the reason-for-action form.' (Williams 1981, 102). So, to summarise Williams's position here, there is an explanation of the man drinking that liquid, which is petrol. It cites a reason *why* the man drinks the liquid. And it is of a reason-for-action form. But it does not cite a reason for drinking

the liquid. So it is of a reason-for-action *form* even though it does not appeal to anything that is actually a reason for action.

It is not at all clear what Williams really means by the idea of an explanation of reason-for-action form that does not cite a reason for action. One possibility is that he is marking a distinction between reasons that are merely causal and reasons that put the action in a rational light, just as reasons for actions do. One reason why the man is drinking this liquid may be that he woke up late; this set off a causal chain that resulted in him being where he is with a glass of clear liquid in front of him. But this reason does not put his action in a rational light, whereas the facts that he believes the liquid is gin and that he wants to drink a gin and tonic form part of a causal explanation of his action that does put it in a rational light. Likewise, that Sally had a pathological fear of furry animals would put her running away in a rational light. What these reasons do not do is favour the action.⁵

What does favour the action is the fact that a bear is chasing her. There is a way of making recommendations for action – one that applies to Sally - that allows one to infer from the fact that a bear is chasing Sally that she should run away. In its simplest form we can think of that system just as the rule: if a bear is chasing you then run away. The rule can be justified by reference to a bit of bear psychology. It is a rule that Sally herself may acknowledge commitment to.

Is Sally's behaviour also responsive to a way of making recommendations that applies to her that allows one to infer from the fact that Sally *believes* that a bear is chasing her that she should run away – one that includes the rule: if you *think* a bear is chasing you then run away? If you were following such a rule you would have to

establish first whether you thought a bear was chasing you and then act accordingly. But clearly Sally is not following nor *should* be following a rule which requires that of her. She should not attend to her psychological states in order to establish how to act; she should attend to the outside world – to whether a bear is actually chasing her.

Of course it is possible to follow a rule which recommends action on the basis of whether you have a belief or not; but such a rule would have a very limited application. For example there may be a rule: if you think that a bear is chasing you you should take your anti-psychotic medication. It does not matter that a bear is not chasing you; you should take your anti-psychotic medicine just in virtue of the fact that you think a bear is chasing you. But this is a peculiar sort of case.⁶ We can assume that in the case under consideration what does matter to Sally is whether a bear is actually chasing her. If a bear is not chasing her even though she believes one is she will make a mistake to run away. And if a bear is chasing her even though she does not believe it she will make a mistake not to run away. The rule that is operative for Sally in the case under consideration is one that makes reference to the fact that she is being chased by a bear, not to whether she believes it.

Now one might respond that the fact that she believes a bear is chasing her itself makes it more likely that a bear is actually chasing her, assuming some degree of reliability in her belief-forming mechanisms, and so indirectly favours her running away. Suppose Sally is accompanied by Susan, who does not believe that a bear is chasing them but then sees that Sally does believe it. Susan may or may not go on to form the belief that a bear is chasing them. But in either case the fact that Sally believes a bear is chasing her favours running if the expected cost of running is outweighed by the expected

cost of not running. Given that Sally believes a bear is chasing her then it may be a good *bet* to run away if Susan is not absolutely sure one way or the other. If Susan had such a reason for running then so presumably would Sally.

But for Sally such a reason will always be redundant. If she has the belief for a reason then it is this reason for thinking that a bear is chasing her that is also her reason for running away; her having the belief does not add any reason to this. And if she does not have a reason for believing that a bear is chasing her then she has no reason to run away either.

It might be possible to construct a bizarre scenario in which it is genuinely the fact that Sally believes that a bear is chasing her rather than the fact that a bear is chasing her that gives her a reason for running away. But even if such an example might be constructed it would not be possible to derive a general case for it always being the fact that she has the belief rather than the fact believed that is the reason for Sally to run. For, when Sally's belief is not reliably formed the fact that Sally believes a bear is chasing her is not a reason for her to run. If Sally is walking through the English countryside, has just watched a film about someone being chased by a bear, and is a very suggestible person, then when she feels the hair rising on the back of her neck she may believe that a bear is chasing her. But this fact in these circumstances does not itself favour running away.

The normative quality of reasons for action requires some separation of reasons from motivation. Kant expressed this by contrasting the way everything in nature works according to laws with the way that rational beings have the power to act according to the *idea* of laws – i.e. according to principles (*Groundwork*, 36). Even if we accept the sort of internalism recommended by Williams (1981) and claim that reasons for Sally to act

must be grounded in some way in her motivational state, we must still take them to exist *independently* of her motivational state. Her will must be able to *respond* to such reasons and be *sensitive* to them. And this means that she must be able to make mistakes about such reasons as well as being able to succeed in lining up her intentions according to them. If facts about what she believed constituted her normative reasons then they would not be properly independent of her motivational state.

Raz (1975) makes the same point when arguing that such facts cannot be used as *guides* for behaviour:

It should be remembered that reasons are used to guide behaviour, and people are to be guided by what is the case, not by what they believe to be the case. To be sure, in order to be guided by what is the case a person must come to believe that it is the case. Nevertheless it is the fact and not his belief in it which should guide him and which is a reason (1975, 17)

Williams too is very clear about this. The fact that the man in Williams's example believes that the stuff in his glass (petrol) is gin does not mean that he has a reason to add tonic to it and drink it, even if he wants a gin and tonic. If reasons for action – normative reasons – must be such that they may exist even when the agent is not aware of them, then the fact that Sally *believes* that a bear is chasing her is not such a reason. And most philosophers who make the distinction between normative and motivating reasons agree. Normative reasons are worldly considerations that favour a

certain sort of action; they are not generally facts about an agent's beliefs about such worldly considerations.⁷

However many such philosophers go on to say that *motivating* reasons are different; they are taken to be facts about the agent's beliefs and desires. If a motivating reason is just an explanatory reason, as for example Michael Smith takes it to be (Smith 1994), then this makes sense. But if a motivating reason is taken to be a reason *for* which one acts (as I have been taking it to be) then it is not clear how to make room for this possibility. For if the fact that Sally believes that a bear is chasing her is not a reason for her to run how can it still be her reason for running? The reasons given in formulations like C seem to be normative reasons that motivate. If the fact that Sally believes a bear is chasing her is not a normative reason for her to run given the reasoning system she is committed to in her motivational state, then it is not a motivating reason either.

Derek Parfit considers the possibility that he falsely believes his hotel is on fire and so jumps into the canal. He baldly states that in this case 'my motivating reason was provided by my belief; but I had no normative reason to jump. I merely thought I did.' (1996, 99) But he makes no attempt to explain why we should say that he is actually motivated by a reason in this case rather than just that he thinks he is. By allowing motivating reasons to be provided by beliefs, as he puts it, he is denying that motivating reasons are simply reasons for action for which one acts. He is extending the notion of motivating reasons, but it is not clear what guides this extension, assuming that the idea of a motivating reason is distinct from that of an explanatory reason.

For R to be a motivating reason for S to φ R must be S 's reason for φ -ing. S must φ in the light of R . R must be a reason or consideration that motivates S to φ .⁸ For any of

these conditions to be the case R must be a consideration that *is taken by S* to favour φ -ing. For R to be S 's motivating reason for φ -ing, R must be taken by S to be a *normative* reason for φ -ing. It follows that motivating reasons must meet what Jonathan Dancy (2000, chapter 5) calls the normative constraint.

This requires that a motivating reason, that in the light of which one acts, must be the sort of thing that is capable of being among the reasons in favour of so acting; it must in this sense be possible to act for a good reason. (2000, 103)

If the fact that Sally believes a bear is chasing her were her reason for running then she would have to at least take it to be a reason for running, and this means that it would have to be the sort of thing that was capable of being among the reasons in favour of running. But, as we have seen, the fact that she believes a bear is chasing her is not, except in bizarre cases, capable of being among the reasons in favour of running. Sally could not take it to be such. So it cannot be her reason for running away.

If motivating reasons must be potentially normative reasons, it cannot be the case that normative reasons are facts about the world and motivating reasons are only ever facts about the agent's psychological state. So why is there such a powerful inclination to say that Sally's reason for running is that she believes/thinks that a bear is chasing her? We have seen one source of this inclination right at the start in Michael Smith's argument that motivating reasons must be psychologically real. What makes reasons psychologically real according to Smith is that they are beliefs. But in response to this argument one could propose instead that what makes a reason psychologically real is

simply that it is believed rather than that it is itself a belief. The fact that a bear is chasing her can be psychologically real for Sally just in virtue of her believing it. Most people, presumably including Smith, accept that the fact that Sally is being chased by a bear can explain at the very least the fact that she believes a bear is chasing her. So why not also accept that it can explain her behaviour?

There is another explanation for the strong inclination to think that it can only be the fact that Sally believes a bear is chasing her that is her reason for running. It is the plausibility of an argument we can call the Argument from False Belief. Jonathan Dancy articulates the argument clearly in the course of his rejection of it:

The main reason for saying [that the things we believe cannot be the reasons that motivate us] is a worry about the case where things are not as the agent conceives them to be. Surely, in such a case, we cannot say that his reason for acting as he did was that *p*. We have to say that his reason for acting was that he believed that *p*. Accepting this for the case where the relevant belief is false, then, we might still hope that ‘that *p*’ can indeed be the explanation where it is the case that *p*, but that where it is not the case that *p* the explanation can only be ‘that he believed that *p*’. But, as Bernard Williams puts it (1980:102), the true-false distinction should not be allowed to affect the form of the relevant explanation. Supposing, therefore, that our explanation should take the same form whether it is or is not the case that *p*, and having already accepted that the correct explanation in cases where it is not the case that *p*, is ‘that he believed that *p*’, we are driven to say the same where the relevant belief is true rather than false. (2000, 121)

This is my paraphrase applied to Sally's case.

1. (Premise) When Sally's belief that a bear is chasing her is false her reason for running is not that there is a bear chasing her.
2. (Interim conclusion) So, in the case where Sally's belief that a bear is chasing her is false, Sally's reason for running can only be that she believes a bear is chasing her.
3. (Premise – Williams's Principle) The true-false distinction should not be allowed to affect the form of the relevant explanation.
4. (Conclusion) So, even when Sally's belief that a bear is chasing her is true her reason for running away can only be that she believes a bear is chasing her and not that a bear is actually chasing her.

Dancy rejects the conclusion and accepts everything else in the argument except the first premise. He makes the bold move that even when a bear is not chasing her Sally's reason for running is that a bear *is* chasing her. This is bold because Dancy accepts a fairly standard way of linking reasons for action and explanations of action. This is that when someone acts for a reason then their reason for acting that way *explains* their acting that way. So Dancy's denial of 1. commits him to accepting that even when no bear is chasing Sally it is still true that what explains her running away is *that a bear is chasing her*. So, as Dancy puts it, this sort of explanation is not factive.

Dancy grants that this would not be acceptable if action explanation was causal. Causal explanations appeal to real things and genuine facts. But Dancy thinks action explanation is not causal, so it need not be factive. Still it must be considered a last resort to accept that that a bear is chasing her explains her running away even when no bear is chasing her. Can we find something else in the argument to attack?

Let me start with the premise in line 3 which I am calling Williams's principle. Williams produces this principle early on in his paper 'Internal and External Reasons' in a section where he is making some fairly fine distinctions in order to clarify his terms before launching his main argument for the claim that reasons for acting must be internal in his sense. Dancy takes Williams's principle to show that reasons for acting must be the same in the case where the belief is true and in the case where the belief is false. But this is certainly not what Williams takes his principle to show. Williams claims that an agent's reasons for action are *different* depending on whether the belief is true or false, although the *form* of the explanation is the same.

Certainly Williams's principle should not be treated in the way Williams himself treats it if it is to serve Dancy's purpose. Dancy is not concerned with the *form* of an explanation but with which reasons actually figure in an explanation. What he needs is the principle that the true-false distinction should not be allowed to affect what actually count as reasons for action. According to this principle, the reasons for running that Sally has when her belief that a bear is chasing her is false are still her reasons for running when the belief is true, and her reasons for running when a bear really is chasing her are still her reasons when the belief is false. So we should substitute 3* for 3, where 3* is as follows:

3*. (Premise) The truth or falsity of Sally's beliefs does not affect her reasons for action. So Sally's reasons for running when her belief that a bear is chasing her is false are also reasons for running when it is true. And her reasons for running when her belief is true are also reasons for running when it is false.

Accepting this gives us just two options concerning Sally's reasons for running. Either her reason for running whether the belief is true or false is that a bear is chasing her. Or her reason for running in neither case is that a bear is chasing her, which leaves the only plausible conclusion being that in both cases her reason for running is that she believes a bear is chasing her. So 3* gives Dancy his conclusion, although 3* should certainly not be attributed to Williams, since he clearly denies it.⁹

If, like Williams, we say that Sally has no reason for running if there is no bear then we must deny 3* (assuming that we ever have reasons for action). But note that 3* has two parts. It is the second part that would be rejected by Williams who thinks that the true believer may have a reason for acting that the false believer does not have, but merely thinks they have. At the same time Williams would reject 2.

Rejecting the first part of 3* too is a move that might be made by someone who was impressed with John McDowell's (1982) disjunctive approach to appearances that is supposed to defeat the Argument from Illusion in epistemology and who thought it could be carried over to the philosophy of action to defeat the Argument from False Belief. The way the disjunctive approach might be applied here is as follows. When it is said that the reason why Sally is running is that she believes a bear is chasing her there are

two distinct (but to Sally indistinguishable) things that might be going on and there is no highest common factor between them. Either Sally's reason for running actually is that a bear is chasing her or Sally's reason is that she merely believes that a bear is chasing her.

On this view the true believer is both better off and worse off than the false believer with respect to her reasons for action. She has the extra reason that a bear is chasing her, but she lacks the reason that she believes that a bear is chasing her. But this seems wrong too. It is easy to see how a true believer may be better off than a false believer; there is an extra reason in the world for her to be sensitive to. But how can the fact that the world turns out to be the way you think *remove* one of your reasons for action?

A sort of inclusive disjunctive account might reject only the second part of 3* while holding on to 2. On this view the true believer has two reasons for running away – both that a bear is chasing her and that she believes a bear is chasing her, while the false believer's reason for running is just that she believes that a bear is chasing her. This would not be vulnerable to the problem just raised since the true believer would not lack any reasons that the false believer had. But one might worry instead that there are too many reasons in this case. The true-believing Sally's behaviour does not appear to be doubly justified. The fact that the bear actually is chasing her seems to be a quite redundant addition if the fact that she merely believes that a bear is chasing her is sufficient to count as a reason for her to run. In any case the arguments presented earlier against thinking of motivating reasons as facts about what agents believe apply whether the beliefs are true or false.

This does not mean that Dancy's rejection of 1 is after all the most reasonable way to respond to the Argument from False Belief given one has an argument against its conclusion. For we still have to look at the *inference* from 1 to 2. To invalidate this inference we need to show that when Sally's belief is false it is possible for Sally's reason for running to be neither that a bear is chasing her nor that she believes that a bear is chasing her. One way this might work is if, like Williams (1981) in the first two or three pages of 'Internal and External Reasons', we say that Sally has no reason for running when her belief that a bear is chasing her is false. The true-believing Sally's reason for running is that a bear is chasing her. The false-believing Sally has no reason for running. This is akin to the disjunctive account in as much as it denies that there is a Highest Common Factor between the false-believing Sally and the true-believing Sally's reasons for running. It does not have the problematic implication of the exclusive version of the disjunctive account that the true believer is worse off in some respect than the false believer with regard to their reasons for action. And it does not fall foul of the arguments that I have developed in this chapter against thinking that facts about what Sally believes should count as reasons for her to act.

Now if Sally has no reason for running it does not follow that she is irrational. There still may be reasons *why* she runs, reasons which put her behaviour in a rational light even if they do not justify or favour her behaving that way. She does not have a reason for running that she thought she had, but her behaviour can still be explained in a way which reveals her rationality. Sally, after she finds out that there was no bear, may feel foolish; she thought she had a reason for running away but it turns out she didn't.

It is also worth pointing out that even though the false-believing Sally's reason for running was neither that a bear was chasing her nor that she believed a bear was chasing her, there may be other reasons we can find for her running. Her reason for running might be that there is *evidence* that there is a bear chasing her; for example that there is a noise in the undergrowth might be her reason for running. This may be a slightly different explanation of her running than the one that cites the fact that there is a bear chasing her. Sally might say: I am not concerned with whether or not there really is a bear chasing me; the existence of this evidence is a good enough reason for me to run. Also, given that we are allowing bad systems of justification to provide reasons for action (reasons relative to those systems) we can say that there is a system of justification embedding the false belief that a bear is chasing Sally from which we can derive the recommendation that Sally should run given the fact that one should run when bears are chasing. So her reason for running might be that one should run away from chasing bears. This, though true (we are assuming), is a bad reason in the circumstances; but can still count as normative (in the relative sense described earlier) and motivating.

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End Notes

¹ Had it been a grizzly bear running away would have been ill-advised, but with a black bear it might make sense.

² For a small sample of moral philosophers who would take her reason for running to be that a bear is chasing her and not that she believes a bear is chasing her see Raz (1975, chapter 1), Williams (1981), Darwall (1983), Skorupski (1997). And although philosophers of action often take reasons for action to be facts about beliefs and desires, some – especially those represented in this volume - do not; apart from myself (Stout, 1996, 2006), see in particular Jonathan Dancy (2000), Rüdiger Bittner (2001) and Fred Stoutland (1998).

³ The real significance of this issue as far as I am concerned derives from the fact that agency essentially involves sensitivity to reasons for action. If we think of such reasons as psychological then we are led to the wrong conception (as I see it) of the relationship between action and the mind. See Stout (2006).

⁴ Like Dancy (2000, chapter 2) I do not think that the agent's desires need be included as reasons for action even in the case where his beliefs are all true, but Williams' claim is perfectly innocuous if all that he means is that the fact that that he felt like a glass of gin and tonic would have been a reason for him to drink that stuff if the glass had had gin in it

⁵ It is precisely because it is not clear whether Donald Davidson (1980, essay 1) is talking about reasons *for* action or reasons *why* someone acts which are of a reasons-for-action form, when he claims in 'Actions, Reasons and Causes' that primary reasons are constituted from a belief and a pro-attitude, that I do not want to make his position the

target of my attack in this chapter, although on the face of it it does look like the sort of psychological approach to reasons that I am attacking..

⁶ This example reflects Jonathan Dancy's argument in (2000, 124).

⁷ See Parfit (1997) for example.

⁸ Notice there is a difference between some psychological state motivating you and the fact that you are in that state being a motivating *reason*. You may be motivated by greed or pathological fear; yet the fact that you have greed or pathological fear is not a reason that motivates you. It is wrong to say that you act in the light of having greed or fear or that your reason for what you do is that have that greed or fear. Likewise we could accept that Sally's belief or state of believing motivates her while denying that the fact that she has the belief is a motivating reason.

⁹ Bittner (2001) follows Dancy in misattributing this principle to Williams.