Against Strong Cognitivism: An Argument from Caring

HILLA JACOBSON *Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel*

ABSTRACT: According to 'strong cognitivism', all reasons for action are rooted in normative features that the motivated subject (explicitly or implicitly) takes objects to have (or lack) independently of her attitudes towards these objects. My main concern in this paper is to argue against strong cognitivism, that is, to establish the view that conative attitudes do provide subjects with reasons for action. My central argument to this effect is a top-down one that proceeds by an analysis of the complex phenomenon of caring and derives a conclusion regarding the (motivational and normative) nature of more basic mental phenomena—particular desires.

RÉSUMÉ : Selon le «cognitivisme fort», toutes les raisons d'une action trouvent leurs sources dans des caractéristiques normatives par lesquelles l'individu motivé (explicitement ou implicitement) prend des objets comme avoir (ou manque), indépendamment de son attitude à l'égard de ces objets. L'objectif majeur de cet article est de contester les arguments du cognitivisme fort, en d'autres termes, de démontrer que toute attitude volitive donne aux individus des raisons pour entreprendre une action. À cette fin, l'argument principal consistera à procéder par le biais de l'analyse du phénomène complexe de la préoccupation, pour en extrapoler une conclusion relative à la nature (incitative et normative) d'un phénomène mental plus fondamental encore : les désirs spécifiques.

I. Strong Cognitivism, Humeanism and the Hybrid View

Recently, the intuitively plausible idea that desires standardly provide subjects with reasons for action has come under attack. In fact, the view that rejects this idea appears to be the dominant view nowadays. It has been argued that it is not

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generally the case that the very fact that a subject desires that some event will occur provides her with a (*pro tanto*) reason to act so as to bring this event about.[1] In its radical form, the attack purports to show that desires—or, to be more precise, desires *qua* desires (see below)—rarely, if ever, provide subjects with such reasons.[2] Rather, reasons for action are rooted *solely* in normative features (moral, prudential, etc.) that the motivated subject (explicitly or implicitly) takes objects (or states of affairs) to have independently of the attitudes that express those reasons; her own attitudes towards these objects are devoid of any reason-giving force. Such reasons are standardly expressed by evaluative beliefs—beliefs to the effect that some objects are valuable in some 'objective', or 'attitude-transcendent' respect. This prevalent view may be called 'strong cognitivism.' My main concern in this paper is to argue against strong cognitivism, that is, to argue that standardly desires (*qua* desires) do provide subjects with reasons—desires are *sources* of reasons.[3]

Philosophers often distinguish two notions of reasons in the context of practical reasoning: motivating (or explaining) reasons and normative (or justifying) reasons. Motivating reasons are the reasons on which a subject in fact acts, and which can serve to explain her actions; normative reasons are *good or valid* reasons, and which can serve to justify her actions.[4] Accordingly, strong cognitivism may be said to incorporate two theses: first, that desires rarely, if ever, explain actions ('strong motivational cognitivism'), and second, that desires rarely, if ever, justify actions ('strong normative cognitivism'). The argument I will present in this paper aims at undermining both theses: it aims

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[1] The philosophical literature distinguishes between two senses of 'desire'. In one sense, we may (intentionally) do things we do not desire to do (because we think, for various reasons, that we ought to do them). Desires in this sense are often referred to as 'desires proper'. In another (and more technical) sense of 'desire', it is analytically true that one who intentionally performs an action has a desire towards this action. 'Desire' in this sense—desire in the pro-attitude sense—refers to any attitude that is motivational in nature. My use of 'desires' in this paper refers to desires proper. On this distinction, see, e.g., Nagel 1970, Davidson 1980, Schueler 1995 and McDowell 1978.

[2] See, e.g., Dancy 2000, Darwell 1983, Hampton 1998, McNaughton 1988, Nagel 1970, Parfit 2011, Quinn 1993, Raz 1986 and 1999, and Scanlon 1998.

[3] Fully defending the proposed view from attacks that strong cognitivists have mounted against it lies beyond the scope of this paper, but section IV will address some difficulties that it raises. For such attacks see, e.g., Quinn 1993, Raz 1999 Parfit 1984 and 2011, and Scanlon 1998. For a critical discussion of some of these arguments, see Drai 2012 and Chang 2004. Chang is a proponent of the hybrid view, which will be presented below.

[4] On this distinction see, e.g., Raz 1978, Parfit 1984, Smith 1994 and Schueler 1995. For criticisms, see, e.g., Stampe 1987.

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to show that desires provide motivating reasons for action, but moreover, those reasons may be good reasons, and so desires may provide normative reasons for action.

Before embarking on this task, it may be helpful to further clarify the strong cognitivist conception, *inter alia* by contrasting it with the conception that occupies the other end of the spectrum—the 'Humean' (or the Belief-Desire) conception. The Humean conception is underwritten by the conviction that desires provide reasons for action regardless of any desire-independent normative characteristics of their objects. Hence it is committed to the idea that the reason-giving force of desires is rooted *solely* in the subject's adopting the attitude of desiring towards these objects. The reason-giving force of desires, or their authority, is rooted in their very existence. Further, desires are the *only* mental states that can provide reasons for action—evaluative beliefs are devoid of any reason-giving force. Thus, all reasons for action are *attitude-dependent reasons*—reasons whose source is the subject's adoption of conative (pro or con) attitudes towards various objects or states of affairs. Humeanism too incorporates two theses: first, that desires are necessary for the explanation of actions ('motivational Humeanism'), and second, that they are necessary for the justification of actions ('normative Humeanism').

According to strong normative cognitivism, all (valid) reasons are *attitude-transcendent reasons* (hereafter, 'transcendent reasons'), i.e., they are rooted in normatively significant features of objects, which are independent of the subject's (pro or con) attitudes towards these objects. All (valid) reasons on which a subject acts are rooted in the fact that the intentional objects of her relevant (pro or con) attitudes fall under (attitude-independent) aspects of the good. The reason-giving force of the relevant attitudes, then, is rooted solely in what they inform the subjects about; to borrow an expression from Stampe,[5] the attitudes serve as 'conduits for the authority' of attitude-independent reason-providing facts.[6]

Strong normative cognitivism does not require that reason-providing attitudes always be strictly cognitive, i.e., that they be evaluative beliefs. It may allow that (some) desires carry normative reasons, but it insists that desires provide us with such reasons in the same way as evaluative beliefs. When a subject

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[5] Stampe 1987.

[6] Strong cognitivists may allow that some reasons depend on 'subjective conditions' (they deny only that these conditions include the subject's attitudes). They may accept that some normatively significant features of objects are relational features whose possession by an object depends upon psychological facts, e.g., on whether a particular object is likely to bring pleasure to a particular subject (see Scanlon 1998, 41-49) or to cause her pain (for the claim that the reason-giving force of pains cannot be attributed to its cognitive dimension, see Jacobson 2013). This issue is addressed below.

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acts on a (valid) reason provided by a desire, her desire involves an (evaluative) *cognitive dimension* which consists of her conceiving of its object as falling under a (desire-independent) aspect of the good. Let us refer to desires which involve such a dimension as *'thought-dependent desires'*. In the case of thought-dependent desires, the subject desires the object as one that possesses certain (attitude-independent) valuable features (e.g., as just, prudent or pleasurable). Therein—in the object's possessing these features—lies the desire's reason-giving force. Proponents of this view may disagree over whether there are desires which lack such a cognitive dimension—*'thought-independent desires'*, but none of them would ascribe to such desires any (normative) reason-giving force.[7] On this conception, then, the (normative) reason-giving force of all motivational attitudes is rooted *solely* in the attitude-independent normative features of the objects they represent; our attitudes towards objects confer no significance upon them. Motivational attitudes provide us with (normative) reasons by informing us of normative features of objects—their authority is derived from their intentional objects. And similar characterizations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to strong motivational cognitivism: a motivational attitude can be either an evaluative belief or a *thought-dependent* desire; but in either case, it is a cognitive element that is responsible for the attitude's (motivational) reason-giving force.

Thus, strong cognitivists of both varieties, being (justly, I believe) impressed by our receptivity to the attitude-transcendent values of things, take this receptivity to monopolize the field of reasons for action. They deny that facts about our desires, inclinations, what we are attracted to, etc., are a distinct source of (either normative or motivational) reasons, such that they confer significance on their objects, rather than merely reflect the pre-existing significance of their objects.

I believe that there is no reason to accept the monistic assumption (accepted by both Humeans and strong cognitivists) that all reasons are basically of a single sort. But as noted, my main concern in this paper is the rejection of the strongly cognitivist picture. In what follows, I will grant our receptivity to transcendent reasons; I will argue for the existence of attitude-dependent reasons, i.e., reasons that are rooted in the significance that our own (conative) attitudes may confer upon objects, and are thus authored, rather than merely discovered, by our minds.[8] Regardless of whether conative attitudes involve conceiving of their objects as ('transcendently') significant, they have the capacity to *endow* their objects with significance—they are *sources* of reasons.

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[7] The terminology of 'thought-dependent desires' and 'thought-independent desires' is due to Hampshire (1965), but the distinction I employ is not identical to his. For similar distinctions, see Nagel 1970, Schiffer 1976, Schueler 1995, Scanlon 1998, and Moran 2001.

[8] I have argued elsewhere (Jacobson-Horowitz 2006) for the view that evaluative beliefs provide reasons for action.

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On the hybrid picture that will emerge, then, both desires and evaluative beliefs have reason-giving force, however, each of these attitudes 'carries' reasons in a distinctive way.[9] Whereas evaluative beliefs *inform* the subject of attitude-independent significant features of objects**,** desires play a role in *constituting* the significance of objects. Some of our (motivational as well as normative) reasons are rooted in our conative attitudes towards objects, rather than in these objects themselves.

(Since I am going to argue for the dual thesis which concerns both the motivational and the normative dimensions, then, unless indicated otherwise, I use various expressions pertaining to reasons as applying to both motivational reasons and normative reasons. For example, a sentence such as 'beliefs carry transcendent reasons' is to be read as meaning both that subjects in fact act on reasons provided by beliefs whose contents ascribe to objects some (attitude-independent) normative features, and that such reasons may be valid.[10] As we shall see, similar considerations lead, *mutatis mutandis*, to both the motivational thesis and the normative thesis, and such a dual use of the relevant expressions makes it possible to unify some of the steps of the corresponding arguments in favour of the two theses.)

I will argue that the very fact of desiring an object may confer significance on it—the adoption of the attitude of desiring towards an object may be at least partly responsible for the desire's reason-giving force. This claim may take a weaker and a stronger form. In its weaker form, this claim applies to thought-dependent desires: it asserts that the reason-giving force of such desires is rooted partly in the adoption of the psychological attitude of desiring towards their objects, and partly in the (attitude-transcendent) normative features that are ascribed to these objects by the desires' (evaluative) cognitive components. A situation in which a subject merely believes that an object possesses some

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[9] I am using the expression 'carries reasons' as neutral between the idea that the attitude merely expresses a reason whose source is distinct from itself and the idea that the attitude itself is the source of the reason.

[10] Clearly, when speaking of transcendent reasons in the purely motivational sense, the (attitude-independent) normative features need not in fact be possessed by the objects to which they are ascribed, and there is a sense ('the conduit sense') in which the reasons, as ones on which the subject actually acts, are not independent of the relevant motivating states. Nonetheless, in this context too, I will usually speak of the reasons as rooted in the attitude-independent normative features themselves. I use this parlance not only for the sake of simplicity. This description is accurate from the first-person perspective: from the subject's perspective, her beliefs are transparent, and her reasons are indeed rooted in (attitude-independent) features of the intentional objects of her beliefs. What the subject takes as a datum for practical reasoning—what she takes to count in favour of φing—is not the fact that *she believes* that φing is right, but the fact that φing is right (see Jacobson 2006).

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('transcendent') value differs from a situation in which the subject also desires this object as such, in that in the latter case the very fact of desiring confers upon the object further significance. (In a situation in which the subject merely believes that the object is ('transcendently') valuable, without wanting it, being attracted to it, etc., the subject may not have a reason for preferring the object over other ('transcendently') valuable objects, or may not have as strong a reason for pursuing it when considering it in itself.)

In its stronger form, the claim regarding the essentiality of the psychological attitude of desiring to a desire's reason-giving force applies also to thought-independent desires. It includes the claim in its weaker form, and adds that thought-independent desires too possess reason-giving force, which reason-giving force is wholly rooted in the adoption of the attitude of desiring towards their objects. Our conative attitudes are capable not only of being directed at features which are taken to have *prior* significance, and thus endowing them with further significance, but also of being independent sources of significance.

In order to undermine strong cognitivism, it is sufficient to establish the claim regarding the contribution of the psychological attitude of desiring in its weaker form. Yet, the argument to which I now turn has two versions. In its modest version, it purports to establish this claim in its weaker form, and in its bolder version, it attempts to establish this claim also in its stronger form.

II. The Argument from Caring—Part One

The debate over the question of whether our attitudes are sources of reasons is standardly run in an arena which, I believe, is hospitable to the strong cognitivist—that of particular, isolated, often whimsical, desires. The argument to be now presented moves this debate to a different arena—that of richer, more complex psychological phenomena such as caring, and then turns back to derive from characteristics of such phenomena conclusions regarding the reason-providing nature of particular desires. This argument, then, may be characterized as a top-down argument: it proceeds by an analysis of the complex phenomenon of caring and derives a conclusion regarding the (motivational and normative) nature of more basic mental phenomena—isolated desires.

We—as well as various other sentient organisms—are beings to whom things matter, or, in other words, we are not indifferent to various happenings. But whereas mattering characterizes mental phenomena of quite different levels of complexity and cognitive sophistication, the notion of caring as I shall use it here refers to a cognitively more demanding and (probably) uniquely human phenomenon. Consider some of the main features of caring, as they are presented by Frankfurt.[11] Caring about something involves guiding

[11] The argument to be presented uses Frankfurt's (1988, 1999) initial characterization of caring as its starting point, but it is not always loyal to the details of this characterization.

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oneself in light of it, over some extended period of time—it involves an 'inherently prospective outlook', and presupposes agency. Thus, caring requires more than wanting something and/or judging it to be desirable or valuable, on a particular occasion; the fact of caring is constituted by a complex set of cognitive, affective and conative dispositions and patterns. The things one cares about are characterized by being important in one's life, and their importance is of a distinctively personal kind. Their being important to the subject in this sense does not commit her to supposing that they ought to be important to others in similar circumstances. Relatedly, even when the things we care about are recognized by us as ('transcendently') valuable—as things that are required by, for example, moral duty or prudential considerations—the fact of this recognition is different from, indeed it clearly does not exhaust, the fact of our caring about them. One's recognizing or judging (even repeatedly, and over an extended period of time) that something has features which render it ('transcendently') valuable still does not suffice for one's caring about it; rather, caring requires the subject's having certain conative attitudes towards what she cares about, and being affected by what happens to it in particular ways.

Now I believe that it is difficult to object to Frankfurt's claim that "if there is something that a person does care about, then it follows that it is important to him", and that, further, "[t]his is not because caring somehow involves an infallible judgment concerning the importance of its object", but rather "because caring about something *makes* that thing important to the person who cares about it".[12] According to Frankfurt, there are two distinct (albeit compatible) ways in which something may be important to a person: "First, its importance to him may be due to considerations which are altogether independent of whether or not he cares about the thing in question. Second, the thing may become important to him just because he does care about it".[13] "It would be a serious mistake", Frankfurt says, "to believe that the importance of an object to someone is not fully genuine unless it is independent of his caring about the object".[14] Thus, one's recognizing that something has features which render it ('transcendently') important or valuable is not only not sufficient but also *not necessary* for one's caring about it. Far from caring being directed only at things one takes to be of prior significance, caring is an independent source of significance.

Since this point is important for my purpose, let me elaborate on it further. Consider the ever-disappointed enthusiastic fan of a certain sports team. He does not assign to his team's winning any (agent-neutral) 'transcendent' importance, nor does he expect his zeal for this team to make him susceptible to any

[12] Frankfurt 1988, p. 92.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., p. 93.

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pleasure or other gratification. Nevertheless, he cares deeply about his team, and this fact makes the team genuinely important to him. It is worth emphasizing that the case I ask you to consider is one in which the fan's caring about the team does not involve any (implicit or explicit) beliefs about intrinsic value that the team possesses. Nor does he have such beliefs about something that is related to the team and that may transfer its value to it. Thus, a second fan may believe that there is something valuable about parity in league sports, and that rooting for underdogs furthers parity. And a third fan may assign merit to a particular player on the team, and take this player's merits to warrant his wishes that the player thrives and that his team succeeds. Yet, our first fan is different. Though, perhaps, sensitive to transcendent values and merits in many other fields (he is a social activist, chooses a profession he deems valuable, etc.), as far as his attitudes towards the team are concerned, he simply lacks any potentially relevant evaluative beliefs. He has not been led to care about the team due to any normative considerations (but rather, say, by accidentally watching a series of games, or by just having the sort of personality who is attracted to underdogs). But now he cares about it just as passionately as his fellow fans—the team, its players and its position in the league have acquired a constant presence in his mental life—as is reflected by his emotional reactions and patterns of behaviour. In particular, he is extremely excited and tensed before each game, takes to heart the team's failures, and rejoices on the rare occasions in which it triumphs; and his actions attest to his devotion to the team, e.g., in that he rarely misses a game, volunteers to paint its shabby club, and periodically writes letters of advice and encouragement to the coach. My claim is twofold. I argue that the short psychological description just provided of the first fan is coherent; and that, given this description, it is plausible to judge that the team *is* important to him. This fan's caring about the team provides him with (defeasible) reasons for acting in (at least some of) the aforementioned ways—e.g., for him, watching the team's games *is reasonable*; and those reasons are ones that a subject who does not care about that team lacks.

To take quite a different example, it seems that some forms of deeply caring about other people are characterized by the fact that our caring about them is (relatively) independent of our taking their character and deeds to warrant our caring, and unaffected by the prospects of our attachment to them making us happy or pleasing us in any other way. (The extreme, and admittedly perhaps exaggerated, expression of this form of caring seems to be captured by the idiom 'unconditional love': taken literally, the notion may be incoherent, but it does capture an element, which if not taken to the extreme, characterizes some forms of love.)[15] There are kinds of devotion to other people that are characterized both by being independent of possible gratifications that our relationships with them may suggest, and, importantly, by *exceeding* what (agent-neutral)

[15] I follow Frankfurt (e.g., 1999, p. 129) in taking love to be a mode of caring.

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attitude-independent characteristics of these people require. Sometimes, when one person deeply cares about another person, the first person may take facts that concern such gratifications, as well as facts that concern the actions that may be required by the objective characteristics and circumstances of the second person, to have little relevance to many of the ways in which she is to behave towards that person. Rather, by far the weightiest factor that dictates the lover's behaviour is the very fact of love.

For various reasons, the case of love for people is suitable for establishing the claim regarding the reason-giving force of desires specifically in its weaker form: this form of caring plausibly presupposes the objective value of its object—namely, of the beloved person. For one thing, persons, as such, have intrinsic objective value. For another, it may be impossible to love another person without attributing to her some specific virtues (over and above the general value inherent to being a person)—love may imply a distinctive form of respect or appreciation, which, in turn, implies awareness of (transcendent) normative features. The point that is important for our purposes is that the very fact of love seems to make a normative difference: there is a strong intuition that the reasons the lover has to act in various ways in favour of her beloved are quite different from the reasons she has for acting in favour of a doppelgänger of her beloved whom she does not love. (Similarly, as Frankfurt has noted,[16] if one were asked whether one would be willing to substitute, say, one's beloved friend, spouse or daughter, with a stranger doppelganger who is 'just like her', surely, the obvious response would be blatant resistance to this idea.) And so, in the case of love, the claim that the reasons provided by love, and the commitments that flow from it, exceed what (agent-neutral) attitude-independent characteristics of the beloved require appear particularly strong.[17] Relatedly, the case of love demonstrates the need to distinguish between the reasons one has *for* a certain attitude and the reasons that are provided *by* that attitude. One's reasons for loving X may be similar to one's reasons for loving Y, who shares X's transcendent evaluative features, and one may have even stronger reasons for loving Z, who shares all of X's and Y's virtues and has some further virtues. Yet, once one comes to love X, the reasons one thereby acquires for

[16] Frankfurt 1997/1999, p. 169.

[17] In Jacobson 2014, I have presented an argument that begins with the crude intuition that that the significance conferred by love upon its objects is of a distinctively personal kind—an intuition that is expressed by the apparent non-substitutability of two similar subjects only one of whom is loved with respect to their importance for the lover. I argued that the initial notion of non-substitutability could be refined and modified so as to form a real challenge to all versions of strong cognitivism and to establish the existence of attitude-dependent reasons. A central part of that paper is dedicated to showing that the commitments that flow from love also exceed *agent-relative* transcendent characteristics of the beloved.

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acting in various ways towards X distinguish X from all other similar (and even 'superior') subjects.

These examples seem to strengthen the idea that sometimes we indeed care deeply about other people or about entities of other sorts, independently of taking them (or their being singled out from others) to have any 'transcendent' importance that would warrant our caring about them, and that in these cases the very fact of caring *makes* them genuinely important (or more important) to us. In fact, it seems that the significance conferred upon an object by the fact of caring can be quite overpowering—for the caring subject, it can render the object the status of a thing to which she is devoted, and whose pursuit may take precedence over many other things. Since something's being genuinely important or significant to a person *gives this person reasons* for acting in certain ways, we may conclude that the fact of caring serves as an independent source of reasons.

I argue that the importance conferred on an object by one's caring about it is not merely a psychological fact; it also constitutes a normative fact. It isn't only that the object of her caring plays a prominent role in the subject's psychological life and guides her actions in various ways. Rather, it seems that the fact that the subject cares about an object may *justifiably* make a difference to her behaviour. The caring subject may be rational in, for example, sometimes behaving towards the object of her caring in ways she would not behave towards similar objects about which she doesn't care. We may also consider cases in which a subject is to choose among different objects, each of which she acknowledges to be of (attitude-independent) value—for instance, a subject who ponders over a choice of one among several (worthy) long-term projects or careers. Her being drawn to, indeed deeply caring about, one of those projects while being left cold by the others is a *valid* consideration, a consideration she *ought* to take into account in making her choice.

Furthermore, this is not only due to normative features which are only contingently and externally linked to the fact of her caring about this project; rather, there is an ineliminable sort of significance whose source is internal to this fact. Thus, suppose it is suggested that the normative significance of the project is rooted in the fact that, due to her caring about it, she is more likely to succeed in it, or in the fact that it would be easier for her to get herself, day after day, to engage with it, or in the fact that she is more likely to enjoy it. It is these (agent-relative) features, rather than the fact of caring itself, which are the source of the project's normative significance for the subject. However, such explanations of the normative significance associated with caring cannot exhaustively account for it. One may have good reason to prefer engaging with the project one cares about over engaging with the project which leaves one cold, even if one is just as likely to succeed in them both, and even if one is more likely to succeed in the project which leaves one cold. Nor is the explanation which appeals to the relative ease of getting oneself to engage with the project successful, for one who cares deeply about a project might find it just

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as difficult to do the relevant work, and moreover, one might find it difficult precisely because one cares about it. Similarly, it seems that one's reasons to engage with the project one cares about are often characterized by their independence of the benefits—affective (enjoyment, avoidance of frustration) and others—that may result from this engagement. Such attempts, then—attempts to reduce the normative significance associated with the fact of caring to features which are only externally linked to this fact—fail: scenarios are always possible in which these features do not obtain, yet one's caring about the project provides one with a valid consideration in favour of choosing that project for which one cares.[18] Thus, the genuine significance the object has for the subject who cares about it is also *normative* significance, which gives this person good or valid reasons for acting in certain ways.

III. The Argument from Caring—Part Two

We can now move to the second stage of the argument. The importance conferred upon an object by the fact of caring about it, as well as the reasons that that fact provides, cannot be attributed to the cognitive components of caring. For evaluative beliefs express only reasons the source of which is external to themselves. That is, since the reason-giving force of beliefs is rooted in what they represent rather than in their own existence, beliefs cannot be origins of reasons. Evaluative beliefs derive their significance and authority *from* their objects (they are reasons *per objectum*), rather than conferring significance *on* their objects (they are not reasons *per se*).[19] This is clear as far as the normative dimension is concerned: it is the fact that φing is good, rather than the fact that you believe that φing is good, that warrants your φing. But the same point holds for the motivational dimension as well: from the first-person perspective (which is the perspective relevant to the reasons on which you act), it is the goodness of your φing, rather than your *believing* that your φing would be good, that you take to count in favour of φing (beliefs are mere 'conduits for the authority' of attitude-independent reason-providing facts). Thus, it seems that (in both the normative and the motivational dimensions) the significance conferred on an object by the fact of caring, as well as the reasons that the fact of caring provides, must have their source in the conative components of caring.

Since, as noted, caring involves also affective or emotional components, there is yet another possibility, namely that the reasons that the fact of caring provides are rooted in these components. There are different theories of emotions,

[18] Explanations of the sort discussed here are suggested by Scanlon (1998), in attempting to rebuff Williams' (1980) account of the example of Owen Wingrave (Henry James' hero), and provide a strongly cognitivist account for this example.

[19] The terminology of 'reasons *per objectum*' and 'reasons *per se*' is taken from Stampe (1987).

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but we need not dwell on their details. For the elements mentioned by these theories as constitutive of emotions are quite limited in number. These elements are cognitive attitudes like judgments (descriptive as well as evaluative), conative attitudes, and qualitative (phenomenal) feels. According to some theories, emotions consist in elements of one or the other of these kinds; according to others, they are complexes of elements of more than one of these kinds.[20] If one wishes to attribute the reasons that the fact of caring provides to some affective component of caring, the question arises to which element of this component it is to be attributed. According to the line of thought presented above, those reasons cannot be attributed to any cognitive element, and, of course, attributing those reasons to conative elements of affective or emotional states would clash with strong cognitivism. The remaining candidates, then, are phenomenal states. In this context, two options suggest themselves: first, that the relevant phenomenal states (e.g., pleasurable experiences) result from various engagements with the object of caring, and second, that the very fact of caring colours the subject's mental life with positive feels—e.g., that the caring subject's merely thinking of what, or who, she cares about is (typically) accompanied by feels such as warmth and delight.[21] As to the first option, it has already been ruled out by the claim that caring is often independent of any gratifications that engaging with its object may provide. As to the second option, even granted that the tendency to have such feels is integral to caring, it is only relevant to (second-order) reasons to be in the state of caring, whereas the reasons I am concerned with are reasons to engage with the object of caring.

The upshot of the argument is that the importance conferred upon an object by the fact of caring about it has its source in the conative components of caring, and thus that particular desires (*qua* desires) are sources of significance and reasons. Moreover, desires have the capacity to endow their objects with significance, even if they do not involve conceiving of these objects as possessing 'transcendent' significance. Desires do not (or do not merely) *inform* the subject of the obtaining of reason-providing facts; rather, desires are *constitutive* of such facts. This follows from the assumption that caring constitutes

[20] Among the views which take emotions to involve elements of various kinds are the view that emotions are sets of beliefs and desires (see, e.g., Marks 1982), the view that they are affect-laden judgments (see, e.g., Lyons 1980), and the view on which they are complexes of beliefs, desires and feelings (see, e.g., Oakley 1992). 'Feeling theories' equate emotions with qualitative feels of a certain kind (see, e.g., James 1884), whereas the most radical cognitivist theories (see, e.g., Solomon 1980, and Nussbaum 2001) equate them with judgments of a certain kind.

[21] Indeed, strong cognitivists sometimes appeal to expected gratifications or pleasures of agents as the prime example of subjective conditions that are relevant to their reasons (see, e.g., Scanlon 1998, Chapter 1, especially Section 9).

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such facts and the assumption that caring need not involve conceiving of its objects as possessing 'transcendent' value.[22]

Before concluding the present section, let me address a possible objection to the argument.[23] Indeed, the opponent of the argument might argue, the fact of caring may sometimes make a difference to our reasons. For example, when a subject is to choose among several worthy projects, the very fact of her caring about one of them is a valid consideration in making her choice. However, this doesn't imply that caring is the source of the *existence* of those reasons. Instead, the explanation of the difference that caring makes to our reasons is that caring affects reasons that are 'already there'. That is, caring may affect

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[22] Whereas the first stage of the argument appealed to elements of Frankfurt's conception of caring, I believe that Frankfurt would have rejected the second stage of the argument. On Frankfurt's view, "the mere fact that a person has a desire does not give him a reason" (Frankfurt 2006, 110). Rather, desires can provide one with reasons only in virtue of one's identifying with them. Caring involves the agent's identification with some of her desires concerning the object of caring, and thus caring is among the sources of the worth associated with our desires (see also Frankfurt 1999 and 2004). On the view I have argued for, it is the other way around: desires are the source of the distinctive worth endowed by caring. Thus, Frankfurt's view may be used to raise an objection to my argument.

I cannot do justice to Frankfurt's conception within the scope of the present paper. I believe, though, that that aspect of his view is untenable. The idea that Frankfurt's account of identification can explain how unauthoritative desires become authoritative has been criticized by others (see, e.g., Bratman 2001 and 2002, Moran 2002, and Watson 1975), and so I would here like to challenge that aspect of his view by challenging the very assumption that caring essentially depends upon identification. Consider a person whose capacity for having higher-order attitudes (which are required for identification) is severely limited—say, she's only capable of ascribing some basic emotions to herself and others. It seems that such a person can have an enduring and passionate interest in another person's well-being and contentment (under her limited understanding of it), an interest that is manifested, for example, by the fact that her own well-being is affected by what is happening to that other person, and by her systematically acting in various ways in his favour. Isn't it plausible that she cares about the other person? At any rate, denying that that person is significant to her, and that she has reasons to act in his favour, is to deny her attitudes of an authority they do possess. There are, of course, normative differences between reflective and unreflective sorts of caring. And if one wishes to reserve the term 'caring' only to the reflective sort, so be it. The important point is that the other person is significant to her in spite of her lacking reflective attitudes that may be said to support her (first-order) attitudes towards him.

[23] I thank three anonymous referees for raising this objection, which lead me to distinguish explicitly between two different conclusions that can be derived from an analysis of caring.

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the strength or the weight of various reasons, but these reasons are anchored in normative features that are independent of caring. The objection might be based on the idea that caring is relevant to our reasons only in cases in which it involves conceiving of its objects as (transcendently) valuable, or on the idea that there are only such 'evaluatively loaded' cases of caring. (For example, as to the ever-disappointed fan, it is arguable that, contrary to what I have argued, in order for the story of his caring about the team to be psychologically realistic, some relevant evaluative beliefs must be present; and one who accepts that such beliefs are not necessary for caring may still insist that in cases in which they are absent, the fact of caring is devoid of any reason-giving force.)

Admittedly, the claim that caring is relevant to our reasons in the (weaker) sense acknowledged by the objection is supported by a stronger intuition than the claim that it is the source of the *existence* of reasons. I believe, though, that even the former claim may be sufficient to undermine strong cognitivism. Recall the distinction between thought-dependent desires, which are directed towards their objects as falling under a (desire-independent) conception of the good, and thought-independent desires. According to strong cognitivism, the (normative) reason-giving force of all motivational attitudes is derived *solely* from the transcendent normative features of the objects they represent—our attitudes merely reflect the pre-existing significance of their objects, they do not confer any significance upon those objects. Now if one accepts that caring is relevant to our reasons, but holds that its relevance is limited to affecting the weight of reasons whose existence is independent of itself, then one is not led by the argument to the radical thesis that desires have the capacity to endow their objects with importance even if they do not involve conceiving of those objects as possessing ('transcendent') importance. That is, in that case one is not led to accept that *thought-independent desires* possess any reason-giving force. But one is led by the argument to the more moderate thesis that in the case of *thought-dependent desires* the attitude's reason-giving force is not derived solely from the transcendent valuable features of its intentional object. Rather, the very fact of desiring is partly responsible for the desire's reason-giving force. The second stage of the argument, recall, proceeded by an elimination of different components of caring, other than its conative components, as the possible source of the normative difference that the very fact of caring makes. Granted that that stage is accepted, it follows that (thought-dependent) desires, in contrast to evaluative beliefs, confer (further) significance *on* their objects. This moderate conclusion is weaker, but it suffices to undermine strong cognitivism.

It is easier to accept that some forms of significance are conferred upon objects by our attitudes towards them, when we are focusing not on isolated conative attitudes but on more complex psychological phenomena like caring.[24]

[24] For an argument that uses a similar strategy with respect to the complex phenomenon of love, see Jacobson 2014.

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Such complex phenomena involve guiding ourselves in light of their objects over an extended period of time—they involve rich and relatively invariable psychological patterns, and for these and other reasons their objects acquire more stable, lasting, and substantive importance in our lives. So, in the case of caring, in contrast with the case of isolated conative attitudes, the significance is more conspicuous, but its source is basically the same: if we accept that caring about something makes it (or enhances its being) important to the caring subject, it must be admitted that our conative attitudes toward things contribute to our reasons.

IV. A Possible Objection and Further Clarifications

In this section, I would like to address a few related objections to the argument, and thereby to further clarify the view for which I have argued.[25] Consider once more the sports fan example. Let us suppose, further, that at a certain stage, he begins to criticize and hate the fact of his caring about the team, and wishes he could 'get over it'. Perhaps he has come to regard the relevant sport as dangerous, or as entirely foolish. In any event, at present, there is no sense in which he views this sport, the team or its players as valuable, and furthermore—he views those things, as well as his caring about them, only as (in various respects) bad. In particular, he judges that these are not the sort of things that are worth caring about. The 'self-hating fan' is alienated from his caring, and thinks it provides him with no genuine reasons.[26]

A major difficulty that is raised by the example is the following: caring appears to be subject to normative evaluation—a subject may take his caring to be rational or irrational. Further, the example seems to illustrate that it is due to the (positive or negative) normative features of the object—e.g., its pragmatic uselessness—that the caring subject is rational or irrational in caring about it. Yet, if prior evaluative beliefs about the object's transcendent features are not an essential component of caring, it isn't at all clear how this could be the case. *Prima facie*, an attitude that involves no cognitive component cannot be subject to normative evaluation. This may suggest that cognitive components are necessary for caring after all. A related difficulty that the example raises is that it may seem that, in such cases as those of the self-hating fan, the fact of 'caring' does not generate reasons. But the view I have argued for in this paper,

[25] I thank three anonymous referees for raising these objections.

[26] There may be other examples that bring to the fore the difficulties I will raise in this section in an even sharper way. One such example (suggested by an anonymous referee) is that of the 'enthusiastic market watcher' who has come to deeply care about whether the Dow Jones Industrial Average closes with a number neatly divisible by 10 at the end of every trading day. Another such example is provided by Quinn (1993), who alludes to a person disposed to turn on all the turned off radios that she sees.

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according to which caring is essentially and intrinsically reason-giving, seems to be committed to the claim that the fact of caring always provides reasons.

Fully addressing these objections is beyond the scope of this paper, as it requires delving into huge issues, such as how, according to the hybrid view, conative attitudes and cognitive evaluative attitudes interact, both at the psychological level and at the normative level (i.e., how they do, and how they should, interact). In what follows, though, I wish to make two initial points. First, I believe that the 'self-hating fan' example does not threaten the thesis presented above as the weaker conclusion of the argument from caring, on which the fact of caring provides further reasons, or strengthens 'pre-existing' reasons, when it is directed towards objects that are conceived as possessing transcendently valuable features. The sort of challenge the example poses to that thesis is similar to challenges faced by all views of practical reasoning (e.g., accounting for cases of weakness of will or recalcitrant emotions), and, importantly, the defender of the moderate thesis can appeal to the cognitivist toolkit for addressing that challenge. Thus, she may argue that the case is incoherent, that it is coherent but does not meet the necessary conditions for caring's providing reasons, etc.

The second point concerns the radical thesis that the argument from caring purports to establish, namely that caring may anchor reasons independently of any transcendent evaluable features that its object possesses. This thesis is surely threatened by these objections. Now, when it comes to pro or con attitudes that are directed towards objects without ascribing to them any transcendent evaluable features, it is tempting to characterize those attitudes in purely motivational—or even purely causal—terms. But this isn't mandatory, and I think that the proponent of the hybrid view must resist this temptation. Specifically, it is essential to the radical thesis that the caring subject need not view the object of his caring under any transcendent evaluative conception of the good; but the proponent of this thesis may hold that caring (as well as desiring) must involve viewing its object in a favourable light (or as having some value), as long as he insists that this is due to, and part of what constitutes, the very fact of caring (or desiring). According to this conception, caring and desiring are not mere dispositions or urges to behave in certain ways and to exhibit certain patterns of affect: a thought-independent desire is a different psychological state from a mere impulse (or impetus), and the two states are characterized by distinct phenomenologies. It is essential to caring and desiring that they involve adopting an evaluative perspective on their object—a perspective that is not (or not only) anchored in evaluable features their *contents* ascribe to their objects, but rather in their *psychological modes*. A genuine caring (or desiring) *forms* such a perspective—it is (or involves) a favourable attitude towards an object (such as liking this object, or being attracted to it)—in this sense, it is possible to care about (or desire) an object without *conceiving of it as valuable*, but it is impossible to care about (or desire) an object without 'regarding' it as valuable or *viewing it in a favourable light*. (Thought-independent) desiring

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or caring are not responses to transcendent evaluable features of objects that merit the adoption of favourable attitudes towards these objects. Yet, they do mark episodes of the subject's favouring, liking or being drawn to objects because of some of their non-evaluable features, and as such they are *phenomenologically quite different* from episodes in which the subject is merely being 'pushed' to pursue various things by a force which is indeed internal, but which, from her own perspective as an agent, is totally alien. In fact, the hallmark of the hybrid view is that both desires and evaluative beliefs are *evaluative* attitudes—they involve taking an evaluative perspective on their objects, *albeit* in two different ways. The fact that non-cognitive attitudes can be evaluative attitudes in the sense just explained is what allows them to endow their objects with significance.

Bearing this clarification in mind, it is now possible to distinguish between two self-hating fans. Both have acquired negative evaluative attitudes towards their 'caring' and its object, wish they could get rid of it, and take it to provide them with no reasons, but this is where their similarity ends. The first fan is now indeed totally alienated from his 'caring' in that the relevant negative cognitive attitudes *have affected his non-cognitive attitudes*—he no longer has any attitudes from the perspective of which the team is viewed in a favourable light. But unfortunately he is left with a set of mere dispositions that 'push' him to perform various actions (such as watching the team's games) and to feel sad or nervous whenever the team loses—he is at the mercy of a motivational force, which, from his own perspective, is utterly alien.[27] Given this description, I believe it is plausible to argue that currently *he neither genuinely cares about the team nor genuinely desires to watch its games*. His present situation (unlike the situation he was in before) is one of mere compulsion—of being assailed by mere urges from which he is estranged. Insisting that his attitudes towards the team must be caring and desiring is presupposing the identification of non-cognitive attitudes with mere dispositions or urges, which is the very conception to which the hybrid theorist objects. Thus, the hybrid view is compatible with the plausible judgment that he has no reasons to engage in activities that are related to the team. Similarly, it is compatible with the observation that caring can be subject to normative evaluation, that one can criticize oneself for caring for 'the wrong object', and that such criticism may effectively result in one's ceasing to care.

Turning to the second self-hating fan, he also harshly criticizes himself. But his phenomenology is different. As much as he wishes that he wouldn't, and believes that he shouldn't, he still likes the team and has (thought-independent) non-cognitive attitudes from the perspective of which it is viewed in a favourable

[27] Of course, the relevant negative cognitive attitudes could have affected his non-cognitive attitudes in a different manner—they could have 'freed' him also from having any such dispositions.

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light. His negative judgments regarding the team and his caring about it have not extinguished the relevant non-cognitive attitudes; from this fan's point of view, the motivational force of those attitudes—attitudes which he resents—is not a brute, utterly alien force. In this case, I think that the attitudes in question are genuine caring and desiring. And these attitudes do anchor *prima facie* reasons, for example, to watch the team's games. The second fan is mistaken in thinking that they do not. The relevant reasons, though, are weak and easily overridden by various counter-reasons. It may perhaps be said that, if he yields to the desire to watch a game, his situation would resemble that of weakness of the will: he would have a reason to watch a game, but would lack a sufficient reason for this action, given all the considerations that he takes to tell against it. In short, the hybrid view is indeed committed to attributing the second fan (if only a weak and non-sufficient) reason for action; but I believe that, in light of the differences between his situation and that of the first self-hating fan, that commitment no longer seems implausible. I hope that these clarifications of the hybrid view go some way towards meeting the charges that are exemplified by the case of the self-hating fan.

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