

Normativity in Internal Reason and External Reason Debate

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In *Internal and external reasons*, Bernard Williams, claims that there is nothing as an “external reason”. He first assumes that there might be two kinds of practical reasons, however, he rejects any possibility for such things as so called external reasons. he argues that all normative reasoning is either internal or non-explanatory. He also introduces a possible situation to have external reason, however he rejects this possibility, too.

In *Might there be external reasons?* John McDowell, in response to Williams’ theory, tries to defend the idea that there are external reasons. He concentrates on the possible situation which are suggested by Williams and he accept some part of his conditions to have an external reason, however he doesn’t accept that a new motivational set should be necessarily came up through *rational* deliberation. He proposes the case of conversion as a counterexample for Williams’s theory.

In this paper, first, I will try to propose a consistent theory of rationality based on Williams’ view. This definition should consider both explanatory and normativity dimensions which are defended by Williams, and I shall explore why the normative dimension is important for both Williams and MacDowell. Then, I will show how Williams assumes the minimum level of normativity in his theory of rationality. Furthermore, I will show how this definition explain why Williams believes that the agent in gin and patrol example is not rational agent and has no internal reason.

In the second part, I will discuss MacDowell’s defense of external reason based on conversion as counterexample. I will try to explain why he thinks conversion is not a case of rational deliberation and internal reason. afterwards, I will explain Williams idea about the rationality of conversion in *Reply to McDowell*. Moreover, I will argue why I believe Williams’s argument against externalists are not quite effective.

At the third part, I explain how normativity and objectivity plays a key role in this debate. I believe that minimum level of normativity in Williams’s theory and maximum level of that in MacDowell’s theory, work just in particular context not in general.

1. Williams' theory of rationality

In the second page of *Internal and external reasons*, Williams states that:

“It looks in the wrong direction, by implying in effect that the internal reason conception is concerned only with explanation, and not at all with the agent's rationality, and this may help to motivate a search for other sorts of reason which are connected with his rationality. But the internal reasons conception is concerned with the agent's rationality. What we can correctly ascribe to him in a third-personal internal reason statement is also what he can ascribe to himself as a result of deliberation, as we shall see.” (Williams, 1979, 102-103)

First of all, it is important to note that internal reason is a theory on normative (justifying or ideal) reasoning as opposed to motivating (explanatory or actual) reasoning.

A reason is normative if and only if it justifies that it is right or rational for someone to act in accordance with that reason. It implicitly means that there are some norms and principles which prescribes actions, and it seems that these norms don't necessarily equal to facts. However, it is clear that these reasons are not always *accessible* of every agent, except the ideal or fully rational one.

In contrary, motivating reason refers to the reason which are *accessible* for the agent at the moment of the action, and in fact this is the reason which motivates an agent towards an action and so we can explain or describe an agent's action based on this reason and the following motivation.

So, it is clear why there is close relationship between motivating reason and an agent's motivations. However, internal reason theorist claims that there is the same relation (with lower degree) between normative reason and a certain agent's motivations. In other words, they claim that such a relationship is a substantial constituent of normative reason. (what Externalist denies).

That being said, Williams proposes two constraints for internal reason. First is the explanatory constraint and the second is rationality.

Williams starts his definition of internal reason (which is assumed to be an interpretation of normative reason) with Explanatory condition, and we know that explanatory is the substantial feature of motivating reason, and it clearly shows his inclination to defend of the strong connection between internal reason and motivation. So, he starts his definition with two subhuman definitions and after that he add the rationality constraint as the second constitute for internal reason. So, Williams starts with an actual definition on internal reason and gradually switch to his final counterfactual definition on internal reason. (Afroogh 2019)

1.1 Actual definition of internal reason¹

In the first page of his famous article (1979), Williams states that there are two kinds of reason statements:

¹. To read more on internal reason see, (see, for instance, Korsgaard 1986; Smith 1994; Velleman 2000; Joyce 2001; Darwall 1983; McDowell 1995 & 1978; Brandt 1979; Nagel 1970)

‘A has a reason to ϕ ’

‘There is a reason for A to ϕ ’

Then, he proposes two interpretations of the truth conditions of these sentences. These two interpretations are as follows:

- 1- Internal interpretation: “the truth of the sentences implies, very roughly, that A has some motive which will be served or furthered by his ϕ -ing,” (Williams, 1979, 101)
- 2- External interpretation: “there is no such condition, and the reason–sentence will not be falsified by the absence of an appropriate motive.” (Williams, 1979, 101)

He also emphasized that “it is reasonable to suppose that the first sentence more naturally collects the internal interpretation, and the second the external, but it would be wrong to suggest that either form of words admits only one of the interpretations.” (Williams, 1979, 101)

Afterwards, Williams starts to explain the first interpretation, namely the internal one, and tries to formulate it in a simple Humean model. He gives two kinds of Humean models:

- a- “A has a reason to ϕ iff A has some desire the satisfaction of which will be served by his ϕ -ing.” (Williams, 1979, 101)
- b- “A has a reason to ϕ iff A has some desire, the satisfaction of which A *believes* will be served by his ϕ -ing” (Williams, 1979, 101)

as it clear, in the first models, it is assumed that ϕ -ing satisfies A’s desires, however, in the second model, it is considered that ϕ -ing satisfies A’s desires just in his eyes not necessarily in reality. This distinction would be useful when he wants to propose his second definition for internal reasoning.

The second model (which is assumed to be an interpretation of normative reason) is very similar to motivating reason. It just refers to the reasons which can be used in the explanation of action without any normative dimension.

Counterexample of gin and petrol

Here, he proposes a counterexample for this condition; however, he rejects this counterexample and just to clarify his conception of internal reasoning and rationality he will state a counterfactual definition of rationality.

First he states a story:

“The agent believes that this stuff is gin, when it is in fact petrol. He wants a gin and tonic. Has he reason, or a reason, to mix this stuff with tonic and drink it?”

There are two ways here (as suggested already by the two alternatives for formulating the sub-Humean model (a) (b))” (Williams, 1979, 102)

- 1- “It is just very odd to say that he has a reason to drink this stuff, and natural to say that he has no reason to drink it, although he thinks that he has.” (Williams, 1979, 102) This answer is based on the first sub-Humean model (a).

2- *A believes* that he has reason. This answer is based on the second sub-Humean model. (b)

According to Williams, explanation is not sensitive to truth. It is just based on the agent's belief. so, in this case the agent has just explanation. Williams says:

“if he does drink it, we 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. This explanatory dimension is very important, and we shall come back to it more than once. If there are reasons for action, it must be that people sometimes act for those reasons, and if they do, their reasons must figure in some correct explanation of their action (it does not follow that they must figure in all correct explanations of their action).” (Williams, 1979, 102)

Williams doesn't accept that in this case the agent has any kind of internal reason, and he assumes that agent as an irrational one. He emphasizes that internal reasons have two important dimension: normative dimension and explanatory dimension.

1.2 Counterfactual definition of internal reason

In this spot he starts to give his more precise definition of internal reasoning. To do so, he proposes some conditions which all of them are taken into account to form his final theory. He present his conditions in terms of four propositions respectively. (S refers to the agent's motivational set)

- 1- “An internal reason statement is falsified by the absence of some appropriate element from S” (subjective motivational set) (Williams, 1979, 102)
- 2- “A member of S, D, will not give A a reason for ϕ -ing if either the existence of D is dependent on false belief, or A's belief in the relevance of ϕ -ing to the satisfaction of D is false.” (Williams, 1979, 103)
- 3- (iii) a. “A may falsely believe an internal reason statement about himself, and (we can add) A may not know some true internal reason statement about himself. (Williams, 1979, 103)

(example: drinking gin) (i.e she has no an internal reason)”
- 4- Internal reason statements can be discovered in deliberative reasoning. Acceptable. (Williams, 1979, 104)

We can formulate Williams final counterfactual definition of internal reasons as follows.

- A has an internal reason if, had he known it, he would have become motivated to ϕ .

The first proposition says that “the absence of some appropriate element from S” is a sufficient reason for the lack of internal reason, (i.e. $\sim S \supset \sim I$.) Using contraposition, it follows: $I \supset S$.

The counterexample of gin and tonic is intended to show that there can be internal reason (for drinking petrol) without appropriate element of S. (for the agent has no motivation to drink petrol.). However, Williams believes that she has no internal reason too. He inputs his second constraint here i.e. the agent's rationality. He explains the rationality of agent with a double formulation 2, and he believes to the equivalency of rationality and having internal reason based on his definition.

In the third proposition he picks out that sometimes an agent may falsely believe that has internal reason, and she has no that in fact. Likewise, an agent may not know a true internal reason which

she really has but she is not aware of this having reason. In 3, Williams states a very important distinction between his definition of rationality (having internal reason) with a basic definition of rationality in decision theory. He emphasizes that *accessible reason* (for the agent) at the moment of action play no role in having internal reason, but, what matters is the *acceptable reason* at that moment. *Acceptable* reason refers to the reason which if the agent was exposed to it, she definitely accepts it. However, at the moment of action she may not be aware of that (for false beliefs or ignorance)

In 4, Williams wants to again stress on motivational (or explanatory) dimension of his definition of internal reason. He states that such reason can be discovered through deliberative reasoning. By this condition he avoids any reason which is unacceptable for the agent even after deliberation process. In other words, there are some reasons which if the agent was exposed to them, she still doesn't come to be motivated toward action; Williams doesn't count such a reason as normative reason and such an agent who denies that such person is irrational.

1.3 Williams' theory of rationality

Rationality for Williams is beyond the motivational reasons, and this is what distinguishes normative reasoning from Williams' motivating reasoning. From his point of view, internal reason, rationality and normative reason are fully connected to each other and so, in the gin example, the agent who has no internal reason would be irrational, and there we can't see any normativity constituted in that case at all.

There are three possible definitions of rationality here:

- 1- Rationality based on the best reason which are *accessible* for the agent at the moment of ϕ -ing (Williams reject this one for the lack of normativity in the patrol example)
- 2- Acting based on the facts. In this case, we take "third personal" view as the fictive view. This notion is normativity in external reason which is claimed by MacDowell. It has the maximum level of normativity. (such rationality is closed to the *right* decision in decision theory)
- 3- Rationality between them (by Williams): action based on the best reason which are *acceptable* for agent if he is exposed to it in that situation. Note that such reason could be inaccessible for the agent at the moment of action for ignorance or false beliefs. This definition has both explanatory and normativity dimensions, and it explains gin and patrol example. (the agent is irrational for if he got exposed to the fact that it is not gin, he will stop drinking it. So in that moment he has no internal reason for her action however he has rationality based on first definition).

1.3.1 Explanation of some examples based on his theory of rationality

- 1- A question about S: If an agent is really uninterested in pursuing what he needs!

There is an objection here about the concept of need. Is it included in S or not? Imagine a person who really needs to X, however, he is not motivated towards X. "It is certainly quite natural to say that A has a reason to pursue X, just on the ground that he needs X, but the agent is unmotivated to pursue what he needs;" (Williams, 1979, 105)

According to Williams, “If an agent really is uninterested in pursuing what he needs; and this is not the product of false belief; and he could not reach any such motive from motives he has by the kind of deliberative processes we have discussed; then I think we do have to say that in the internal sense he indeed has no reason to pursue these things.” (Williams, 1979, 105) And he adds:

“However, if we become clear that we have no such thought, and persist in saying that the person has this reason, then we must be speaking in another sense, and this is the external sense.” (Williams, 1979, 105)

Based on his theory of rationality, even though “need to X” could satisfy the explanatory constraint (if the agent follows this) however, this is not *acceptable* for the agent even after he get fully aware of this, and it couldn’t motivate her. So, according to Williams, she there is no internal reason to follow, and she doesn’t violate any internal reason, and she is not irrational person.

- 2- “In James’ story of Owen Wingrave, from which Britten made an opera, Owen’s family urge on him the necessity and importance of his joining the army, since all his male ancestors were soldiers, and family pride requires him to do the same. Owen Wingrave has no motivation to join the army at all, and all his desires lead in another direction: he hates everything about military life and what it means. His family might have expressed themselves by saying that there was a reason for Owen to join the army. Knowing that there was nothing in Owen’s S which would lead, through deliberative reasoning, to his doing this would not make them withdraw the claim or admit that they made it under a misapprehension. They mean it in an external sense. What is that sense?” (Williams, 1979, 106)

As we see, there is no motivation for Owen even after some discussion and it means that he such reasons are not *acceptable* for him, and he if he is not counted as irrational person. However, if he joins the army without any motivation (if it is possible) he would be irrational person based on William’s theory.

- 3- Public goods and free riders’ problems

At the last step of his argument he talked about a challenging issue. “A problem which has been thought to lie very close to the present subject is that of public goods and free riders, which concerns the situation (very roughly) in which each person has egoistic reason to want a certain good provided, but at the same time each has egoistic reason not to take part in providing it.” (Williams, 1979, 111)

Some questions which he proposes in this regards are as follows.

1. Can we define notions of rationality which are not purely egoistic? Yes.
2. Can we define a notion of rationality where the action rational for A is in no way relative to A’s existing motivations? No.

Williams believes that rationality is consistent with both egotism and altruism, and in the case of non-egoistic agent we have rationality with altruistic approach at the same time.

However, the second question leads us to the major difference between Williams and McDowell. McDowell believes that we can define such notion of rationality and using the example of

conversion he would clarify his idea. As I mentioned, McDowell's definition of rationality is based on *right decision*.

McDowell's article contains two major parts. In one part he tries to define some conceptions based on Williams's view. In this part he clarifies Williams's two important conditions for external theorists. In the second part, he will reject Williams's object using the notion of conversion.

1.3.2 Deliberation

Williams, in his final definition of rationality, proposes the important conception of deliberative reasoning. This concept is one of the most important concepts in this debate.

According to Williams, "a clear example of practical reasoning is that leading to the conclusion that one has reason to ϕ because ϕ -ing would be the most convenient, economical, pleasant, and so on way of satisfying some element in S, and this of course is controlled by other elements in S. But there are much wider possibilities for deliberation, such as: thinking how the satisfaction of elements in S can be combined, where there is some conflict among the elements of S. The deliberative process can also subtract elements from S. Reflection may lead the agent to see that some belief is false." (Williams, 1979, 104)

Imagination has a key role in deliberative reasoning. Because using imagination we can combine some abstract ideas which each other or find some new ways toward some new concepts.

1.4 Is external reason possible?

Williams tries to interpret external reason based on Kant's categorical imperative. However, he finds that there is an important difference between categorical imperative and these alternatives called external reasons. Categorical imperative is related to morality and they are necessarily moral maxims. However, external reason is more general and are not restricted to moral maxims. So, they cannot be categorical imperative.

Williams' arguments against externalism

First argument:

Williams propose his main arguments against the existence of external reasons. We can formulate these two arguments as follows. In the first argument, he tries to get the conclusion that there are no any external reasons. Using two M.T, he proves his claim.

1. If there is a reason, then it should explain... (Each reason has two dimension, explanatory and normativity)
2. If it explains ... then there should be a motivation
3. There is no motivation in the external reason
4. So, there is no explanation
5. So, there is no external reason

He adds "If something can be a reason for action, then it could be someone's reason for acting on a particular occasion, and it would then figure in an explanation of that action.

But nothing can explain an agent's (intentional) actions except something that motivates him so to act." (Williams, 1979, 107)

Second Argument:

Moreover, Williams claims that all the reasons that you may think to be external are really internal. (using dilemma) In this argument, Williams try to prove that each thing that you think is an external reason is either non-explanatory or internal reason. He starts his argument with this question: “Does believing that a particular consideration is a reason to act in a particular way provide, or indeed constitute, a motivation to act?” (Williams, 1979, 107)

Using a dilemma, he argues that:

If it doesn't provide a motivation, then it is no explanation

If it does provide a motivation, then it is internal

So, each thing that you think is external reason, is either non-explanations or internal reason.

Both arguments are very similar. And both arguments emphasize on the explanatory dimension for normative reason. According to Williams, the explanatory dimension is necessary for reason and it means that there should be a motivation at work.

“On the other hand, if he does drink it, we 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. This explanatory dimension is very important, and we shall come back to it more than once. If there are reasons for action, it must be that people sometimes act for those reasons, and if they do, their reasons must figure in some correct explanation of their action (it does not follow that they must figure in all correct explanations of their action). The difference between false and true beliefs on the agent's part cannot alter the form of the explanation which will be appropriate to his action.” (Williams, 1979, 102)

1.4.1 Williams conditions for externalists: A possibility for external reasons

After proposing his arguments against the existence of external reasons, he tries again to make room for the possibility of some kinds of external ones. Actually in this part he proposes two condition for external theories. However, at last he rejects the possibility of satisfying these two conditions at the same time. He states:

“External statements can of course be made about agents who are already motivated; but that is not the interesting case. The agent does not presently believe the external statement. If he comes to believe it, he will be motivated to act; so coming to believe it must, essentially, involve acquiring a new motivation. How can that be?” (Williams, 1979, 108)

Williams adds:

“the agent should acquire the motivation because he comes to believe the reason statement, and that he should do the latter, moreover, because, in some way, he is considering the matter aright.” “I think, have to make the condition under which the agent appropriately comes to have the motivation something like this, that he should deliberate correctly; and the external reasons statement itself will have to be taken as roughly equivalent to, or at least as entailing, the claim that if the agent rationally deliberated, then, whatever motivations he originally had, he would come to be motivated to ϕ .” (Williams, 1979, 109) (Afroogh 2020)

Brunero McDowell's conception of Williams's conditions for externalists as follows.

1- Genuine externalism requirement (GER)

“ ‘A has a reason to F’ to be a genuinely external one, there has to be nothing within A's S that is rationally related to his F-ing.”

2- Rational motivation requirement (RMR):

“The external reasons theorist needs to hold that if A rationally deliberated, then he would come to be motivated to f, whatever A's motivations are to begin with. It means that, there should not be any connection between first motivation and secondary motivation.” (Berunero, 2007, 24)

1.4.2 Rejection of the possibility by Williams

Williams states that: “keeping in mind that rational deliberation must proceed from the motivations in the agent's S” and he adds:

“the new motivation should be in some way rationally arrived at, yet at the same time it must not bear to the earlier motivations the kind of rational relation which we considered in the earlier discussion of deliberation.” (Williams, 1979, 109)

Williams states that there is no reason for him to suppose such condition can be met.

Two objections and reply

1- Why Williams states there is no reason for him to suppose such condition can be met?
Reply:

In *Internal and External Reasons*, he just briefly proposes that “RMR and the GER cannot be jointly satisfied if we accept the view that rational deliberation must proceed from the motivations in the agent's S, and so externalism is false.”

However, we will see his more detailed reply in *Reply to McDowell*. I will discuss it in Section 2.2.

2- Why Williams assumes that if the agent has a new motivation by rational deliberation, and if it is completely separated from the first one, it would be a case for external reason? It seems that, McDowell's responding to Williams' arguments is not fully convincing. In the case of conversion, we assume that the agent, after receiving some new reasons, comes to be motivated and comes to believe if he just brought up properly. McDowell claims that there is no connection between S and this new motivation, and it is not proceeds from S. However, it seems to that if we accept that this new motivation is completely separated from the original S, it doesn't entail to the fact that there is an external reason. For, in this

new and separated case, we have still some kind of motivations towards ϕ -ing! It is clear that conversion leads us to recognizing just a new motivation and it would not be a case of external reason.

Reply:

It seems to me that here, Williams just want to emphasized on the impossibility of forming a new motivation fully separated from the original one. As we see in RMR, he wants to say that the main obstacle for externalist is to form such impossible secondary motivational set. He is not going to say that if you could do this, you would definitely can make room for external reason. In other words, there are at least two main problems for externalists, (1) forming a new motivational set which is completely separated of the original, and (2) what is mention it this objection. Williams just simply mention the first obstacle.

2.1 MacDowell's defense of externalist introducing conversion

McDowell, basically, agrees with the two parts of William's statements. He believes that to have an external reason there shouldn't be any elements of S (GER). And he believes the RMR and the GER cannot be jointly satisfied: likewise, he believes that there is no example which can satisfy both conditions at the same time.

However, he doesn't completely agree with RMR, or the necessary committed of external theorist to this condition. He states that there is no reason for such a commitment specially the part of "rationally deliberated". McDowell thinks that Williams is right to believe the externalist cannot 'invent an application of reason in which it can impel people to action without owing its cogency to the specific shape of their prior motivations', however, he posed some *irrational* deliberation which leads to the new motivation toward action.

McDowell defines the idea of conversion and its role in his argument as follows:

"The idea of conversion would function here as the idea of an intelligible shift in motivational orientation that is exactly not effected by inducing a person to discover, by practical reasoning controlled by existing motivations, some internal reasons that he did not previously realize he had. But if its upshot is a case of considering matters aright, why should such a process not count as someone's being made aware of some external reasons, reasons that he had all along for acting the in the relevant ways? "(McDowell, 1995, 74)

"Prior to conversion, there is nothing within the agent's S rationally related to his F-ing, so it is clear that we are here dealing with a genuine external reason. After conversion, the agent comes to be motivated in the same direction as the person who has been properly brought up. The conversion itself is not the result of any process of practical reasoning. (just as being properly brought up usually involves non-rational elements as well) but, McDowell argues, there is no reason to think that this poses any problem for the externalist since externalists do not have to be committed to the RMR." (Berunero, 2007, 26)

McDowell states that externalist are not committed to rational deliberation, and agent can be

motivated through an irrational one like conversion. And such an irrational deliberation is not connected with the agent's original S.

However, we already discussed that why, even we accept McDowell's argument, it doesn't lead to external reason. It is simply just a new motivation towards action and a new internal reason.

Furthermore, Williams, in Reply to McDowell, rejects McDowell's argument. He will emphasize that what McDowell intended by "rational deliberation" (and so irrational one) is clearly different by what is intended and discussed by Williams.

2.2 Williams' reply to MacDowell

In *Reply to MacDowell*, Williams casts doubt on MacDowell's formulation of his (Williams) conditions for externalists. According to MacDowell, Williams believes that there should be a *rational (i.e. right or correct)* deliberation for external reason. MacDowell "states that there is no reason for such commitment specially the part of "rationally deliberated"." And he proposes conversion as irrational deliberation and as counterexample for internalism. He states that in the case of conversion there is no rational (i.e. right or correct) deliberation for action, and because there is no rational (i.e. right or correct) deliberation toward action, it doesn't require to proceed from the original motivation. (in contrary with what Williams said "keeping in mind that rational deliberation must proceed from the motivations in the agent's S, ") and so we have reason without any connection to the agent's S.

Williams state that he didn't assume any right or correct or formal deliberation between S and action. What is meant by "rational deliberation" is a kind of deliberation which can be produced based on imagination and in the case of conversion we have still such a connection and rational deliberation. So, it would be a kind of internal reason, too.

Williams, in his first article (1979) briefly said what is meant by rationality is what is considered in the earlier discussion of deliberation.

"the new motivation should be in some way rationally arrived at, yet at the same time it must not bear to the earlier motivations the kind of rational relation which we considered in the earlier discussion of deliberation." (Williams, 1979, 109)

In Reply to MacDowell, he explains his answer in details and states:

"The assumption, he [MacDowell] claims, is that the external reasons theorist must take a certain view of the transition from the state in which A is not motivated by the alleged reason to a state in which he is motivated by it. The assumption is aid to be that an external reasons theorist must see this transition as being effected by *correct deliberation*. It is this assumption, McDowell argues, that permits me to force a choice between two alternatives: between a deliberation that is a function of A's existing S, and a deliberation that will arrive at the desired conclusion whatever A's existing S, and a deliberation that will arrive at the desired conclusion whatever A's S may be. But, if the external reasons theorist need not assume that A would arrive at the right conclusion by deliberation, then I cannot force this choice" (Williams, 1995, 89)

Then he says:

“I do not think that my argument presupposes quite what McDowell says that it presupposes” (Williams, 1995, 90)

he adds:

“Consider the statements,

(R) A has a reason to ϕ .

(D) If A deliberated correctly, he would be motivated to ϕ .

...

My argument can be best approached through the converse question: can every occurrence of (D) in which it may be replaced by (R)? Given a reasonable construction of the hypothetical itself, the internalist can give an account of (D) in which it may be replaced by (R). This is because he can impose, as he supposes, some constraints on what counts as deliberating correctly. Those constraints, as I emphasized, are by no means fully determinate, and they are certainly not “formal.” They allow for such things as the exercise of the imagination.” (Williams, 1995, 90-91)

2.3 Role of Normativity in rationality

It seems that the main difference between Williams and McDowell is in the level of normativity. Williams assumes the minimum level of rationality and McDowell invoke the maximum level of normativity. Williams in reply to MacDowell states:

“I insisted in my writing about this question that no account of ‘A has reason to ϕ ’ can be adequate unless it has normative force, and I tried to explain how the internalist account (with the indeterminacies that any realistic account demands) meets this requirement. McDowell acknowledge that this is my aim, but he claims that I have not left enough, or the right-shaped, space for normativity; that my account is too “psychologistic” I accept that the account is psychologistic, in the sense that on my view a statement about A’s reasons is partly a statement about A’s psychology. ... McDowell may think that I have drawn the line in the wrong place, and have relied on too “procedural” a conception of the relation between the hypothetical deliberation and A’s S. but some constraints on the idea of deliberating correctly, as it appears in (C) above, are needed if statements about people’s reasons, on the model of (R), are to say anything distinctive. I said earlier that it was a problem, so far, with an externalist account that (R) does not emerge as a statement distinctively about the person A. it is also, and relatedly, true that, if (R) does say anything about A, this externalist account does not sufficiently distinguish what (R) says about him from other things that might be said about him ... But I want still to press the point that I made originally, that from both an ethical and a psychological point of view it is important that (R) and its relatives should say something special about A, and not merely invoke in connection with him some general normative judgment.” (Williams, 1995, 95)

He accepts that his definition of internal reason is too subjective and psychologistic, however he thinks that there is no way to say something about a special agent which is not psychologistic. He states that MacDowell’s theory of rationality is more normative, however, his theory is not about a certain agent A. He formulates MacDowell’s argument as follows:

“(G) if X were a correct deliberator, X would be motivated in these circumstances to ϕ -ing”

and states that doesn’t say any distinctive thing about A. Williams believes that a theory of rationality should be about some certain agents, and he believes that such theory is not about a certain agent. Williams adds: “I confess, though, that nothing yet has persuaded me to give up the opinion that internalism in some form is the only view that plausibly represents a statement about A/s reasons as a distinctive kind of statement about, distinctively, A” (Williams, 1995, 95-96)

3. conclusion

Williams and McDowell both emphasized that normativity matters for practical reasoning; and it is clear why normativity matters for *normative practical reasoning* (as opposed to motivating reasoning). However, it seems to me that there is close relationship between normative vs. motivating reasoning and objective vs. subjective reasoning and it may make importance of normativity clearer.

I am sympathetic with McDowell that Williams's arguments are too psychologicistic or subjective. And I am sympathetic with Williams that McDowell's theory of rationality is too normative or objective. But why it is not good for a rational theory to be so subjective or so objective? Or what level of normativity or objectivity is required for a good theory of rationality? Who determines this required level? It seems to me that commonsense and intuition would be the least controversial answered here, and I think, from commonsensical point of view, both of these theories are plausible just in some particular contexts not in general. So, it might be the case that a contextualist approach can be helpful to have a more plausible theory. It seems to me that countextualist rationality can persuade Williams and satisfy his condition that says a theory of rationality should say something distinctive about an specified person. At the same time, it seems to me this approach is not so subjective and psychological which is objected by McDowell. (Afroogh 2021)

Are Williams' arguments effective?

At last but not least, I think Williams both arguments against externalists are not quite effective. The main assumption of his argument is that if there is a reason, it should have explanatory dimension and it should explain the agent's action. But Williams himself acknowledges that explanatory dimension doesn't mean that such reason should explain all possible case.

“This explanatory dimension is very important, and we shall come back to it more than once. If there are reasons for action, it must be that people *sometimes* act for those reasons, and if they do, their reasons must figure in *some* correct explanation of their action (it does not follow that they must figure in *all* correct explanations of their action).” (Williams, 1979, 102)

It means that it needs just to explain some cases even though it would be just ideal agents. So, it is not correct that if a reason has explanatory dimension it either motivates the agent or is internal reason. (second and third lines of Williams' argument) it is quite possible which we have external reason which has explanatory dimension (it explains just ideal agent's actions) but it doesn't motivate a lot of non-ideal agents. Furthermore, even in the case of ideal agent which that reason definitely motivates the agent, we can't say that this reason would be internal; for, by definition an external reason is a reason which is based on some norms whatsoever the agent's motivation are. It means that it is independent of the motivational set, however it is not inconsistent with them. We can have external reason with or without motivation. Put it in other words, being motivative doesn't distinguish internal reason from external reason. But, the main criterion is that external reason is mind-independent and get his credit from real norms, however internal reason is the outcome of the norms which are *acceptable* for the agent and is fully mind-dependent.

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