

ACTION AND PRODUCTION

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PRODUCTION-ORIENTED theories of practical reason hold, roughly, that our reasons for performing an action ultimately depend on (1) how things are likely to turn out if we perform that action—what would happen, which states of affairs would result—and (2) what reasons we have to care about whether things turn out that way. And when it comes to choosing between two courses of action, the reasons to favor one over the other will depend on a comparison of the way things would go were one to perform one as opposed to the other.¹ This way of thinking about reasons for action can seem quite natural. Actions do make a difference in the world. They effect and prevent changes to the way things are, and it can hardly be denied that our reasons to care about the changes we effect or prevent by and through our actions are relevant when it comes to the issue of whether we should *do* various things.

Douglas Portmore, in a recent paper, puts the idea like this:

If our actions are the means by which we affect the way the world goes, and if our intentional actions necessarily aim at making the world go a certain way, then it is only natural to suppose that what we have most reason to do is determined by which way we have most reason to want the world to go.²

The general picture looks even more promising once we notice that, even where there appear to be considerations that bear on what one should do independently of whether a given consequence is thereby brought about, it often seems to be

- 1 Many philosophers who explicitly discuss this conception use the label “teleological.” See, for example, Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*; Hurka, “Value and Friendship”; Wallace, “The Publicity of Reasons”; and Portmore, “The Teleological Conception of Practical Reasons” and *Commonsense Consequentialism*. But it is in some ways an unfortunate label. For one thing, the ethical theories of Aristotle and Aquinas deserve to be called “teleological” if any do. But not in the present sense. A better name would probably be the “production” view, after Aristotle’s conception of production as that which is done for the sake of some further end. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. VI, chs. 2, 4.
- 2 Portmore, “The Teleological Conception of Practical Reasons,” 118.

a fairly trivial matter to redescribe our concern in terms of a wider event or state that *is* brought about (or hindered) via one's action. For instance, we may think that one has a moral reason to keep a promise even in cases where the advantages of breaking it outweigh the benefits to the promisee (and others) of keeping it. But we need not understand this as a case in which, even though the end being pursued is legitimate, a certain means (breaking one's promise) is ruled out—and ruled out for reasons that have nothing to do with the effectiveness of that means in realizing the end. We need not understand things this way because it is obvious that, if one breaks a promise, one thereby brings it about that the promise is broken. And the moral value of the promise may provide decisive reason to prefer the state of affairs in which one's promise is kept.

Once we acknowledge that this “consequentializing” move is available, it can be hard to see what sort of consideration or principle could possibly bear on how we should act that cannot ultimately be understood as a matter of our actions' efficacy in producing (or preventing) changes in the way the world is. It seems, then, that if we are asking after the point of performing a particular action, we should simply look to the way the world would be altered by its performance and ask what could be said for wanting the world to be that way.

In this paper I hope to undermine this production-oriented conception of practical reason. My argument has two main parts. First I will offer a counterexample and then argue that the most promising reply—one that employs the above “consequentializing” move—fails. Though I do think the counterexample has intuitive force, my primary aim in this part of the discussion will be to establish that the possibilities for making this consequentializing move are limited in a crucial respect.³ In particular, while it may be possible for the production model to accommodate reasons to perform actions for their own sake, I will argue that one cannot employ the same strategy with respect to an agent's motives—the reasons for which she acts. It seems sometimes to matter how an agent is motivated. But the relevance of this for the agent cannot coherently be understood in terms of reasons for wanting it to be the case that she acts for certain reasons. This move is ruled out, in this case, by a constraint on what it is to be a reason—what I call the Deliberative Constraint on reasons.

3 At least this is so in the context of a theory of practical reason. “Consequentializing” is a term most frequently employed in discussions of moral theories conceived of as theories of right action. See, for instance, Dreier, “Structures of Normative Theories”; Portmore, “Consequentializing Moral Theories”; Brown, “Consequentialize This”; and Schroeder, “Teleology, Agent-Relative Value, and ‘Good.’” Because my arguments below depend on the nature of reasons and reasoning, they do not bear directly on the consequentializing project as applied to theories of the right. The implications of this paper for that project will depend upon one's view of the relation between moral rightness and practical reason.

The second main task of the paper is to identify a regulative principle of action that is not reducible to any concern having to do with one's efficacy in producing or preventing various outcomes (including those that consist in the performance of some action). The principle I identify is one that enjoins us, as rational agents, to act *for* the reasons we judge to decisively support our actions. I argue that this principle best explains the rational failure involved in certain cases of self-manipulation—a type of rational failure that we cannot explain if we assume a production-oriented account of practical reason.

1. PRODUCTION THEORIES OF PRACTICAL REASON

Let us begin by being more precise about what constitutes a production theory of practical reason. We can usefully distinguish two components of the view.⁴ The first is a thesis stating necessary and sufficient conditions for reasons for action. (As I will use the term, an “outcome” associated with an action may cover any event or state of affairs resulting from that action's performance.)

Equivalence Thesis: (1) One has a reason to perform some action, ϕ , in circumstances C if and only if (a) one has a reason to want some type of outcome to obtain, and (b) one's ϕ -ing in C would result in an outcome of that type; (2) one has more reason to ϕ than to ψ in C if and only if one has more reason to want the outcome associated with one's ϕ -ing than to want the outcome associated with one's ψ -ing.

The second component is a thesis about the dependence of reasons for action on reasons for preferring that certain outcomes obtain:

Dependence Thesis: (1) If one has reason to ϕ in C , this is in virtue of the fact that one's ϕ -ing in C would result in a type of outcome one has reason to want; (2) if one has more reason to ϕ than to ψ in C , this is in virtue of the fact that one has more reason to want the outcome associated with one's ϕ -ing than the outcome associated with one's ψ -ing.

It is important to note that, at this level of generality, nothing is implied about what kinds of reasons an agent might have for wanting some outcome to obtain. In particular, this picture is neutral on the questions of whether the rational ranking of outcomes needs to be in any sense impartial, or whether the event or state of affairs that one has most reason to promote is the one that is imperson-

4 These theses are based on Portmore's characterization of the position in “The Teleological Conception of Practical Reasons,” 120.

ally best. Such views will count as production theories, but they import further assumptions that the general conception is not committed to as such.⁵

It is also important to be explicit that the notion of *outcome* as it is deployed in the two theses is broader than the ordinary notion. In particular, as mentioned in the introduction, some accounts will construe the outcome associated with an action so as to include the performance of the act itself.

The production conception is perhaps most naturally associated with traditional consequentialist views in ethics and with standard decision theory.⁶ But because of its capaciousness about the types of outcomes that may be counted as relevant, the view is much more widely held and cuts across some traditional ways of drawing the distinction between consequentialist and deontological moral theories.⁷ Rawls, for instance, categorizes moral theories as deontological if they do not define the right in terms of some prior conception of the good.⁸ This does not tell us anything about how the right is related to one's reasons for action. It is easy to imagine a view according to which (a) the right is prior to the good in Rawls's sense, (b) one has reason to prefer outcomes in which one acts rightly to outcomes in which one fails to act rightly, and (c) this is what explains why one has reason to do the right thing.⁹

5 Cf. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, 80–81.

6 I do not mean to suggest that all consequentialists accept the production view of practical reason. Some are not interested in practical reason at all. Moreover, to move from a theory like utilitarianism or decision theory to a particular production-oriented account of reasons for action, one would need to make some further assumptions. For example, since classical decision theory does not rationally evaluate preferences one by one, we would have to understand claims about what one has *reason* to prefer as determined by its consistency (in the sense defined by decision theory) with one's other preferences.

7 Thomas Nagel, for example, is explicit that reasons for action always take the form of reasons to promote events (including sometimes the event consisting of a certain action being performed), though he goes on to reject consequentialism as the correct account of morality. See Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism*. And Portmore's project is to show how the moral permissions and constraints recognized by common sense are compatible with the production conception of reason, precisely in order to defend the view that we always have most reason to do what morality requires. See Portmore, *Commonsense Consequentialism*. For earlier discussion relevant to this issue, see Broome, *Weighing Goods*; and Dreier, "Structures of Normative Theories."

8 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 24–26.

9 There are also theories that appear to endorse a production-oriented view of reasons for action, while incorporating negative side constraints as among the reasons that count *against* this or that action. Even if, on such views, the moral reason not to kill an innocent person has nothing to do with the reasons to want certain outcomes (not) to obtain, the positive reasons in favor of performing particular actions will all depend on the desirability of the re-

2. THE IDEA OF EXCLUDED REASONS AND A COUNTEREXAMPLE

Assuming the basic production conception, the reason to perform any particular action is that it will be a (perhaps constitutive) means of producing an event or state of affairs that one has some reason to want realized. And if one has a reason not to perform some action, this reason is given by the fact that performing the action would produce an event or state of affairs that one has some reason to want not to be realized.

Given this structure, the production conception yields the following principle:

Excluded Reasons: If there is any constraint on the kinds of considerations on which we can legitimately act, this constraint must be explicable in terms of a constraint on the considerations that can serve as bases for wanting a given outcome to obtain.¹⁰

In this section I will suggest that there are sometimes constraints on what can count as a reason for action that do not apply to reasons for desiring outcomes. If this is right, and the Excluded Reasons principle does not hold for these cases, it would undermine the Equivalence Thesis.

I will begin by considering an argument of Scanlon's against the production view, an argument that relies on distinguishing different ways in which considerations can bear on what a person should do.

Scanlon thinks that the structure of practical reasoning is more complex than would be allowed by the thesis that all reasons for action are derived from the desirability or undesirability of various states of affairs. This complexity is due to the possibility of reasons that, in Scanlon's words, bear "not on the desirability of outcomes, but rather on the eligibility or ineligibility of various other reasons."¹¹ Examples of this phenomenon include what Joseph Raz calls "exclusionary reasons."¹² Consider Raz's view of promising, for instance. A promise, according to Raz, serves not only as a reason that counts in favor of performing the promised action, but also as a second-order reason excluding consideration of other first-order reasons, reasons that would otherwise be relevant in the situation. For instance, if I promise to read your manuscript and get you comments by the end

sulting outcomes. The argument from self-manipulation, which I present below, will apply also to such "constrained" production views.

10 In the next section, I will consider and reject an argument to the effect that the production view does not in fact entail the Excluded Reasons principle.

11 Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, 84.

12 See Raz, *Practical Reason and Norms*.

of the week, then not only do I have reason to do this, but I have reason to treat a range of other considerations as simply irrelevant to the question of whether or not I should do this. Although reading your manuscript will mean I will have less time to get my own writing done, and although my interest in having more time to write would normally be a reason not to spend so much time commenting on your work, my promise to you does not merely compete with the reason I have to spend a significant portion of my time writing, perhaps outweighing it. The fact that I have made the promise means that I should not regard the time it will take away from my own work as a factor to be considered at all in deciding ultimately whether to fulfill my promise. The promise simply renders this consideration irrelevant. So says Raz.

Let us grant for now that practical reasons do sometimes exhibit this complex structure. Sometimes factors that would normally be relevant are excluded from consideration. Is this incompatible with the production account of reasons for action? Scanlon seems to suggest as much in the passage quoted above. One thing he may have in mind is that, if we accept a view according to which the reasons for and against, say, keeping one's promise derive from the desirability of the respective outcomes of doing so versus doing something else, we would be committed to a simple weighing model of promissory obligations. Thus, the production conception would falsely imply that certain considerations (like my interest in having time to write) are relevant to a decision (even if they were ultimately outweighed) in situations where, in fact, they are not relevant at all.

But the production conception of reasons does not entail a simple weighing model of (e.g.) promissory obligations. For it is at least formally open to the production theorist to say that, where one has made a promise, then, because of this, certain considerations will be irrelevant to the appropriate preference ranking of possible outcomes. Thus, if Raz's model of promises is correct, it is possible that this is in virtue of the correctness of an analogous model according to which promises provide exclusionary reasons for preferring certain outcomes to others. My interest in spending more time writing is neither here nor there when it comes to the question of whether I should keep my promise to read your manuscript. But, the production theorist will say, that is because it is neither here nor there when it comes to the question of whether I should want it to be the case that I keep my promise rather than break it.¹³

13 Though this move is formally open on the production conception, I think it should strike us as a fairly counterintuitive view of promise keeping. To think that what explains the force of one's reason to do what one has promised to do is that one has special reason to want the world to go a certain way—namely, in such a way that one keeps one's promise—seems to get things backward. Rather, it seems to me that if I want it to be the case that I have kept

Nevertheless, there seem to be cases in which, although the above response is formally open to the production theorist, in fact there are constraints on our reasons for action that do not apply to our reasons for wanting the associated outcomes to obtain. That is, there are cases in which the Excluded Reasons principle does not appear to hold.

Consider that the sort of practical reasoning that is appropriate to social or institutional roles often involves bracketing certain considerations that would otherwise be relevant.¹⁴ For example, imagine you are a state official charged with awarding a contract for a large public project. Given your position, you ought to treat certain considerations as irrelevant to your decision about whom to award the contract to. The fact that you are old friends with the owner of one of the firms vying for the job, for instance, should play no role in your deliberation. Now, the question is whether, in this sort of case, your reasons for wanting or hoping for a certain outcome should be constrained in the same way.

It seems clear that the requirement of impartiality here does not limit the kinds of considerations that may properly ground one's desires or preferences for outcomes in the same way that it limits the appropriate grounds for action. In contexts where this sort of impartiality is called for, it may be very important that a given consequence of your action be at most a foreseeable side effect. But this does not imply that it contributes nothing to the desirability for you of the outcome. The responsible exercise of public authority does not require that you refrain from giving the job to someone who happens to be your friend. It merely requires that you not allow the fact that she is your friend to influence your decision. But it seems perfectly consistent with the requisite degree of impartiality to hope that in the end it is your friend who wins the contract—and to hope for this result because she is your friend and therefore someone you should want to see succeed. It does not amount to cronyism to want your friend to do well or

my promise, this is because I recognize that that is something I have reason to do. And indeed, once we reverse the order of explanation, it is easy to become suspicious of the claim that doing what one has promised to is, in itself, and independently of any more "concrete" effects, a desirable way for the world to go. Suspicions only grow once we notice that one apparently has no comparable reason to care about whether others keep their promises. Thus one may aim at outcomes wherein one keeps one's own promises, though this results in several other promises being broken by other people. And does this not reveal our commonsense views about promissory obligations to be paradoxical? It seems to me that, on the contrary, what we should be suspicious of is the initial move—the explanatory reversal—that set us on this path to paradox. However, my main line of argument does not rest on the intuitions expressed in this note. On the supposed paradox of deontological constraints, see Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*.

14 Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, 52.

to be glad that, as it has turned out, you were able to award the contract to her—just so long as you did not award the contract to her *because* she was your friend.

3. MOTIVES AS “OUTCOMES”

There is a natural response to this sort of case. The production theorist may complain that we have not fully specified the outcomes to be compared and that once we do we will be able to capture the relevant complexity involved in such practical reasoning in a way that is consistent with the production conception. The relevant outcome associated with your act, the suggestion goes, should include not only the performance of the act itself (e.g., awarding the contract to your friend), but also the motives that led to its performance.

The idea, applied to our example, is that there would be some unfairness, not in awarding the contract to your friend *per se*, but in awarding her the contract in part because she is your friend. But this, it will be said, can be framed as, in the first instance, a point about the outcomes you have reason to prefer. You should not take your friendship with a certain person to be relevant in considering whom to give the job to because you should prefer the state of affairs in which your decision is based solely on the qualifications relevant to the project over states of affairs in which you take into account other sorts of reasons, such as that one of the applicants is a friend of yours.

This expanded view of the types of events and states of affairs whose desirability is relevant in practical reasoning appears to allow for a version of the production theory that is compatible with both of the following claims:

1. The fact that someone (call her Green) is a friend of yours is a reason to prefer an outcome in which you hire her for the job.
2. The fact that Green is a friend of yours is *not* relevant to your decision about which applicant to hire for the job.

How is this possible on the production conception? Notice that the sense in which 2 is true cannot be that your friendship with Green provides literally no reason to hire her. If that were the proper interpretation of 2 then it, together with 1, would imply that the Equivalence Thesis was false. Rather, the thought is that 2 can be interpreted so as to follow from the following further claims about the relative desirability of various outcomes:

3. You have reason to prefer an outcome in which your decision is based only on the professional qualifications of the candidates, and Green is

offered the contract, to an outcome in which Green is offered the contract in part because she is your friend.

4. You have reason to prefer an outcome in which your decision is based only on the professional qualifications of the candidates and Green is *not* offered the contract to an outcome in which Green is offered the contract in part because she is your friend.

Claims 3 and 4 are consistent with 1 and seem to provide a plausible interpretation of the claim (in 2) that your friendship with Green is not relevant to your decision. Your friendship with Green is irrelevant in the sense that, whether or not in the end you should choose Green's firm for the job, the outcome of doing so on the basis of deliberation that gives weight to your friendship will always be worse than other outcomes it is in your power to realize.¹⁵ All of this is perfectly in keeping with the production conception of reasons for action.

The response being considered, in effect, denies that the production conception commits us to the Excluded Reasons principle. We can, consistently with the two theses that constitute the production theory (Equivalence and Dependence), interpret constraints on the reasons for which one may legitimately *act* without denying that those reasons are genuine grounds for wanting certain outcomes to obtain. The claim is that this is possible because we can account for the former constraint having to do with action, not by denying that the "excluded" reasons are genuine reasons to act, but by appeal to entirely different reasons—reasons that bear on the desirability of the outcomes associated with the agent's motivations.

I do not think, however, that this is a tenable response. It might secure the Equivalence Thesis, according to which your reasons to want certain outcomes to obtain perfectly correlate with your reasons to act in certain ways. But it does so at the expense of the Dependence Thesis. We cannot explain why some consideration provides you with a reason to act in terms of the desirability of an event that consists in your acting for that reason.

The proposal under consideration is, again, that although you have reason to want Green to get the contract because she is your friend, all things considered, the outcome you have most reason to prefer is that you award the contract to the best qualified candidate (whomever that turns out to be) and do so solely because they are the best qualified. The proposal depends on a further turn of the consequentializing screw—a further expansion of the types of "outcomes" that can occupy the position of a reasonable goal to be intentionally pursued. That

15 Compare Portmore's response to Scanlon's tennis player example in Portmore, "The Teleological Conception of Practical Reasons," 137.

is, we have reached an iteration of the production theory according to which the agent, in considering what to do, will need to consider her own motives as potentially relevant components of the outcome she has reason to promote or prevent.

I do not want to deny that one might have good reason to want it to be the case that one acts on the basis of some considerations as opposed to others. The question is whether it makes sense to say that this gives one reason to act on the basis of those considerations—for instance, to hire a candidate on the basis of their qualifications alone, leaving aside personal connections. The fundamental objection I wish to press against this account is that it gets the order of dependence backward. In general, we have reason to want it to be the case that we act on the basis of a certain consideration because that consideration really does give us good reason to act, and not the other way around.

Let us begin with a general point. Even if it is true that it would be good or desirable or useful in some respect for a person to ϕ , under the circumstances, this does not necessarily constitute a *reason* for that person to ϕ . For one thing, whether she ϕ 's or not may not be in any sense up to her. So we need to ask: What more is needed, then, to establish that a given consideration provides a reason for a person to ϕ , beyond its indicating that her ϕ -ing under the circumstances would be in some way good or desirable? I propose we look to the potential role that consideration could intelligibly play in the agent's reasoning or deliberation about whether to ϕ . As John Searle puts it, "You have to be able to *reason* with reasons."¹⁶ Along these lines, I offer the following, fairly weak condition on something's being a reason:

Deliberative Constraint: R is a consideration that provides a reason for S to ϕ only if it is possible that S could, without irrationality, take a consideration of type R to support ϕ -ing in the course of deliberating about whether to ϕ .

Now, we have been considering a proposal on behalf of the production theorist about how to explain why it might be that an agent should ignore certain consid-

16 Searle, *Rationality in Action*, 104. See also, Williams, "Internal and External Reasons"; Korsgaard, "Skepticism about Practical Reason"; Kolodny, "Why Be Rational?"; Shah, "A New Argument for Evidentialism"; Setiya, *Reasons without Rationalism*; and Raz, *From Normativity to Responsibility*. Some of their formulations of the connection between reasons and reasoning are stronger than others. Williams's and Shah's versions, for instance, seem to require that, to be a reason, a consideration must be able to explain what an agent does given the agent's actual attitudes and dispositions. The version I formulate in the text is much weaker and does not imply that whether some consideration provides a reason for an agent depends on the contents of that agent's subjective motivational set.

erations—like your friendship with one of the bidders for a contract—considerations that, by the production theorist's lights, should, strictly speaking, provide the agent with reasons to act. The proposal was that we can appeal to the fact that the agent has good reason to want, as an outcome of her actions, that she acts on the basis of certain considerations as opposed to others. I will now argue that such a fact (or the agent's recognition of that fact) could not satisfy the Deliberative Constraint on reasons, and so cannot constitute a reason for action.

An initial problem with the proposal is that it looks like the very attempt to promote the relevant outcomes, in response to one's recognition of their desirable features, would undermine any possibility of success. To see this, let us return to our example. You are to decide, let us suppose, between two architects bidding on a state contract: Green and Brown. The project-related considerations—proposed designs, projected costs of the proposals, etc.—appear to favor Brown (if only slightly). On the other hand, Green is an old friend of yours. Now, we are supposing that the question relevant to your deliberation about what to do is *not* whether your hiring Brown would be a more desirable state of affairs than your hiring Green. Rather, the question is whether your hiring Brown solely on the basis of his qualifications (call this outcome *B*) would be a more desirable state of affairs than your hiring Green partly on the basis of your friendship with her (call this *G*).

Let us grant that you have more reason to want *B* to obtain than *G*. How are you supposed to bring it about that *B* obtains? It might seem easy. Once you realize you have reason to prefer *B* to *G*, you just award the contract to Brown. But doing this does not in fact bring about outcome *B*. Rather, it brings about a distinct outcome, viz., the event consisting in your hiring Brown on the basis of your recognition that hiring Brown on the basis of his qualifications is preferable to hiring Green because she is your friend. To hire Brown for the reason that outcome *B* is preferable to outcome *G* is to hire him for a different reason than that specified in outcome *B*, and so fails to realize the latter outcome. Thus, the attempt to act so as to produce the outcome you have most reason to want—if it is undertaken on the grounds that it is the outcome you have most reason to want—is self-undermining.

The general problem is that one's own motivations are not themselves directly subject to one's choice or will. One cannot come to be motivated by a consideration through one's judgment that *being so motivated* would be a good thing.¹⁷ Rather, for the consideration to motivate, insofar as you are rational, you must take it to count in favor of the action you are deciding on. Of course, you

17 Cf. Velleman, "Deciding How to Decide"; Hieronymi, "Controlling Attitudes."

might hire Brown on the basis of his qualifications not because you take this complex outcome to be preferable to the alternatives, but simply because you did not think about your friendship with Green, say, or because you overestimated Brown's qualifications relative to Green's. In that case you would have brought about the outcome you had reason to want. But you would have done so by sheer luck—not in response to the reasons you had for preferring that outcome.

One might reply that, though it may not be possible to immediately determine one's motives at will, one can act indirectly, arranging things so as to ensure that one has the motivations one wants to have. One could arrange to be deprived of certain information, for instance, or even, with some ingenuity, be provided with misleading information.¹⁸

This will not be enough, however, to capture the intuition behind the croynism counterexample. For we can imagine that you, in your role as a public official, had no feasible indirect means of bringing it about that your motives were strictly impartial. If you had had such an opportunity, then the production theorist might be right to insist that you take it. But if we stipulate that no such opportunity was available, then, given the Deliberative Constraint on reasons (along with our earlier assumptions about the case), the production view implies that you have most reason to award the contract to Green because she is your friend, your role as a public official notwithstanding. And this does not seem right. Your mistake consists not only in your failure to take opportunities (supposing you had them) to manipulate your motives; it consists in your giving favor to your friend.

Even if we set aside the question of *how* to go about producing the motives in oneself that one supposes would be desirable to have, there is a more fundamental problem with this way of understanding practical reasons. The problem, as I will now argue, is that it implies that the question of what one has good reason to do is never directly relevant to one's decision about what to do. To explain this implication, I need to make two intermediate points about the sort of production-oriented account that includes the agent's motives among the outcomes whose desirability furnishes reasons for action.

The first point is that this view generates a type of regress. Suppose that considerations *A* and *B* provide reasons for desiring the outcome associated with performing an action, ϕ . As we have seen, on the current proposal, this does not

18 This would be to exercise what Hieronymi calls "managerial control" over one's mental states. Managerial control is analogous to the kind of control we exercise over objects in our environment and contrasts with the kind of activity involved in committing ourselves to some course of action (intention formation) or to the truth of some proposition (belief formation). See Hieronymi, "Controlling Attitudes."

show that I should ϕ for these reasons. It may be that some further consideration, C , gives me reason to prefer the outcome associated with ϕ -ing on the basis of A alone. Let us grant for the sake of argument that there is some way for me to bring it about, in response to C , that I ϕ solely on the basis of A . But now another question immediately arises: Whatever I propose to do to bring it about that I ϕ on the basis of A , should I do *that* on the basis of C ? C shows that ϕ -ing on the basis of A is a desirable outcome, but it is an open question whether I should treat C as a reason to promote that outcome. This will itself depend on whether there are good reasons to desire the outcome associated with this complexly motivated action. But then, of course, the same sort of question will arise again. Call this the regress point.

The second point I want to raise is that there is simply no necessary connection between the desirability of the outcome associated with ϕ -ing on the basis of R and R 's being a consideration that counts in favor of ϕ -ing. There is nothing to rule out, for example, that the outcome associated with *drinking a cup of coffee on the grounds that one loves Sophocles* might be preferable in certain respects to other outcomes one might promote.¹⁹ But this is obviously not enough by itself to show that the fact that one loves Sophocles is a good reason to drink coffee. There is no rational connection between these two things. (Indeed, we could imagine situations where the lack of a rational connection is part of what explains why drinking the coffee on this basis is a desirable thing to have occur.)

Now, the production theorist will presumably agree that one's love of Sophocles is no reason to drink coffee. But she will insist that although the fact that I love Sophocles is not a good reason for me to drink coffee, it *could* nevertheless be the case that I have good reason to drink coffee on the grounds that I love Sophocles. This means, however, that the fact that some consideration is *not* a good reason to perform a given action does not warrant me in concluding that I should not treat it as one, even a decisive one. The question of what I should take into account in deliberating is not settled by consideration of which factors provide rational support for the various courses of action I am considering. Call this the irrational-motivation point.

Let us put these two points together. The irrational-motivation point shows that, on the current view, there is no constraint on the agent to give weight to, or choose on the basis of, only good reasons—reasons that genuinely bear on the object of her choice. For there may be reason, one level up, to think that it would be preferable for her to act on the basis of irrelevant reasons. The regress point, however, shows that the same could be true at that second level as well.

19 The example comes from Raz, *Engaging Reason*, 8.

And indeed, at each point at which the agent might consider the practical question of whether some outcome is worth promoting, it could in principle be that it would be best if the agent were actually to *settle* that question on completely irrelevant grounds. It follows that at no stage of the deliberative process will the agent reach a point where what is directly relevant to how she should conclude her deliberation is what she has good reason to do. For a conclusion about what one has good or most reason to do—in the sense that the balance of relevant considerations favors one of the available courses of action—settles nothing. Such a conclusion is, according to this view, compatible with its being the case that one has good (higher-order) reason to act on the basis of some irrelevant (or rationally overridden) consideration, and thereby be led to do something other than what one has good (first-order) reason to do. And yet, this conclusion—that one has good reason to do such and such on the basis of such and such considerations—does not settle the matter either. It is possible that one has good reasons to ignore the considerations that led to that latter conclusion (the regress point again). At no point will an answer to any of the questions in this series license one to go ahead and form the intention to promote the relevant outcome.

This consequence seems sufficient to rule out any attempt to derive reasons for action from the desirability of states of affairs consisting in the agent's having acted on the basis of certain reasons or motives. A theory of practical reason cannot be coherent if it implies that the question of what I have good reason to do is never directly relevant to first-person deliberation.

Let me summarize our progress so far. I raised a counterexample to the Equivalence Thesis based on the nature of our objection to cronyism by public officials. It seems very plausible that personal ties may give a public official good reason to desire a certain outcome, without thereby giving her any reason to do what is in her power to effect that outcome. The wanted outcome should be, at most, a side effect of the official's actions. I then considered the suggestion that we can save the Equivalence Thesis, and so the production conception, by analyzing the case as one where the official has reason to treat her personal connection as irrelevant, not because, strictly speaking, it is not a reason for her, but because she has reason to want it to be the case that she is motivated differently. If we include the agent's motives as possible components of the "outcomes" mentioned in the Equivalence Thesis, the thought went, we can see that our anti-cronyism intuitions are consistent with the production conception after all.

But we should reject this strategy for responding to the cronyism counterexample. There are good objections to any view that attempts to derive reasons for an agent to be motivated by certain considerations from the fact that the agent

has reason to want to be so motivated. Such a view both violates the Deliberative Constraint on reasons and yields an account of practical reason and deliberation on which the question of what one has good reason to do is never treated as directly relevant to one's decision about what to do. The production theorist must therefore abandon at least one of her theses. Either there are considerations (such as one's role as a public official) that bear on how we should conduct ourselves, though they do not bear on the desirability of associated outcomes—and thus the Equivalence Thesis is false—or, if they do bear on the desirability of the outcome (given that we are conceiving of the outcome as consisting in one's acting for certain reasons), then it cannot be *in virtue of this* that they provide reasons to act—and thus the Dependence Thesis is false.

Of course, it remains open to the production theorist to reject the substantive normative intuitions motivating the example—for instance, that one ought not to take into account personal affections in the administration of public duties. Nevertheless, we have achieved an important result, which is independent of substantive ethical intuitions. What the above arguments show is that there is a limit to what can be built into the “outcome” associated with an action for the purposes of deriving reasons for action. If there are cases where one has reason to bring it about (indirectly) that one acts from a certain motivating reason, irrespective of whether that motivating reason rationally supports the action, such cases will necessarily be exceptional. It cannot in general be an open question whether acting *for* the reasons one rightly takes to count in favor of one's decision is itself something one has reason to do. If there is a sense in which one ought to act for certain reasons on a given occasion, this will not (except perhaps in abnormal cases) be explained by the fact that the state of affairs constituted by one's having acted for these reasons is, on balance, to be preferred to the alternatives. This is a result that I will rely on in what follows.

4. SELF-MANIPULATIVE ACTS

I turn now to a different kind of case that raises problems for the production conception. Often, an agent will have reason to want herself to act in a certain way—either because her acting in that way will have further desirable consequences or because it will itself be a desirable outcome (or both). On the production conception of reasons, this will give that agent some reason to perform the action in question. But it may also provide some reason for her to perform a different action, by which she can get herself to perform the first. One can sometimes bring it about that one does something, not simply by doing it, but less directly, through various forms of self-manipulation, self-inducement, or

self-entrapment. It seems to me evident that, in certain cases, employing such indirect methods of bringing oneself to act is irrational. What I hope to show is that the best explanation of the irrationality in these cases appeals to the fact that, although the agent's self-manipulative act produces a result she has reason to want, this does not give her any reason to act in that way. Indeed, I will go even further and argue that the agent's failure to recognize this fact betrays an incomplete grasp of the concept of a reason for action.

Consider an example. Marge sees that she has hardly any food in her refrigerator and that she therefore has reason to go to the grocery store. She realizes that, if she smokes her last two cigarettes, she will be out and will need to go to the store to buy another pack. Once she is there, she knows that she will also purchase the groceries she needs (in the past, nearly every time she has stopped at the grocery store to buy cigarettes, it has occurred to her to take advantage of the opportunity to stock up on some groceries as well). And so she decides to smoke her last two cigarettes in order to bring it about that she buys groceries.

We can imagine circumstances in which this would be a sensible way for Marge to proceed. For example, she might be worried that if she does not smoke her remaining cigarettes she will forget to go to the store, or succumb to laziness or agoraphobia. But the point I want to make now is that, the less concerned she is with such things, the less intelligible her choice seems. Marge's smoking to get herself to go grocery shopping appears permissible only if she expects that she would not otherwise go.

To bring this out, let us stipulate that Marge is not worried that if she does not smoke she will not shop. She does not anticipate any rational or agential defect that might otherwise prevent her from getting herself to the store. She merely sees two options she could take, both of which she is reasonably sure will result in her buying groceries. One option is to simply get in her car, drive to the store, and buy groceries. The second option is to smoke her last two cigarettes, which she is confident will lead to her buying groceries. Given this stipulation, it seems clear that there is something irrational about Marge's behavior. Her choice makes no sense.

Notice, however, how nicely Marge's reasoning fits with the production view. She recognizes that she has reason to want a certain state of affairs to obtain—namely, that she goes to the store and buys groceries. And she recognizes that by acting in a certain way (smoking her last cigarettes) she can promote that state of affairs. What she does, she does in order to bring about an outcome she has reason to want. So what is wrong with Marge's reasoning here? Why should it count as less than fully rational?

There are three possible explanations we should consider. One is that the de-

sirability of Marge's buying groceries simply does not give Marge any reason to smoke her cigarettes, despite the fact that it would lead her to buy the groceries. A second possible explanation would be that, while the desirability of her grocery shopping does give her a reason to smoke, there are much stronger reasons for her to go directly to the store instead. On this account, the overall balance of reasons is not sufficient to support her smoking the cigarettes. Finally, we might try to explain Marge's irrationality not by considering the reasons she has (or lacks) for the various courses of action she might take, but rather by citing her failure to conform to some rational requirement of coherence or consistency among her attitudes.

If we accept the production conception of reasons, we will not have recourse to the first of these explanations. This is because, on that conception, action is judged ultimately in terms of its (probable) efficacy in bringing about this or that outcome. And, by hypothesis, the case is one in which (a) the intended outcome of Marge's action is one she has reason to want, and (b) she has correct causal beliefs about what she can do to promote that outcome.

It might be suggested that this is wrong, that Marge's buying groceries is a voluntary action and as such cannot be understood as a causal product of her earlier actions. Her act of smoking cigarettes, on this view, would not contribute to bringing about the state of affairs in which she buys groceries, and therefore the desirability of the latter would not provide any reason for the former. This libertarian conception of action, according to which freely willed acts are not caused or explained by prior events, is probably not one that will be embraced by many production theorists. But even if we were to accept such a metaphysics of free will, we should still take Marge's smoking to play a non-superfluous role in bringing about the outcome in which she buys groceries. By smoking, she provides herself with a motive or incentive to go to the store she would not otherwise have—an incentive we can assume she freely responds to. Whatever the precise nature of the influence this incentive has on her will, the earlier act of smoking was clearly not a redundant factor in bringing her to act as she does. Without it, she would not have the reason to go that she subsequently acts on.

By the lights of the production view, then, Marge is right to think that the desirability of her buying groceries gives her at least *a* reason to smoke her cigarettes. Therefore, if the production conception is correct, there must be some other explanation of Marge's irrationality. I will now argue that neither of the potential alternative explanations is adequate.

Let us turn to the second reasons-based explanation. Is there some special reason Marge has not to get herself to shop by way of smoking her remaining cigarettes? Is there, for instance, some further interest of hers (beyond her need

for groceries) that would be better served by going directly to the store, rather than smoking?

Well, one obvious factor is that smoking is bad for Marge's health. Isn't this a reason not to take this route to the store? This suggestion, however, pretty clearly does not get to the heart of the matter. For one thing, it would be easy to alter the example in order to eliminate such health-related concerns. Would it really be any less crazy for Marge to chew her last stick of nicotine gum (or brew her last cup of green tea) in order to promote her purchase of groceries?

But the more important point is this: if the issue is that Marge has health-related reasons not to smoke, then these would equally count against a decision to smoke a couple of cigarettes that is entirely independent of her decision to go grocery shopping. She might decide to go shopping and then decide that, before she does, she will have a smoke. The health-related concerns would kick in here as well. But this choice, and the deliberation leading to it, do not seem irrational in the same way as in the original case. Her decision might be unwise, but it is intelligible. What this brings out is that the health-related reasons do not speak to the apparent irrationality of smoking *as a way* of bringing it about that she buys groceries. But this is what needs to be explained. The problem is with the rational connection between the proposed means and the end. The fact that there is some additional objection to the act she adopts as her means will not help us understand that problem.

The appeal to the health-related costs of smoking to explain where Marge has gone wrong appears to miss the point. And the problem with this explanation will generalize to any appeal the production theorist might make to reasons Marge has not to get herself to go buy groceries in the way she does. Any appeal to the additional disvalue or cost, whatever form it takes, that Marge will incur by smoking rather than simply going, will constitute an objection to her overt behavior—smoking, then going to the store, then buying more cigarettes along with groceries—regardless of whether she smokes *in order* to get herself to buy groceries. But, intuitively, the problem with Marge does not surface until we look beyond her outward behavior to the structure of her motivations.

Perhaps it will be suggested that this is not so. The reason Marge has not to smoke is precisely that it is inefficient *as a way* of achieving the desired result that she buys groceries. But this does not really help. To say that it is an inefficient way of achieving the result is to say that there is an alternative way of achieving the same result (buying groceries) that carries fewer costs. It is the avoidance of these costs that matters. In other words, the reason to take the more efficient rather than less efficient means to an end is that it helps minimize the negative

impact on one's other ends and interests.²⁰ But again, this is a matter of what one does, not why one does it.

At this point, the production theorist might try to offer a more direct explanation of Marge's mistake. Perhaps the event of Marge's *smoking in order to bring it about that she buys groceries* can itself be construed as an "outcome"—a way the world might go—that is on balance undesirable. The objection to Marge would then be that she chooses to act in such a way as to bring about this undesirable outcome.

This, however, is just a version of the move I argued against in the previous section. It appeals to an "outcome" consisting in an agent's acting on the basis of certain reasons or motives. And though there is nothing wrong in this context with allowing that there is a broad sense of "outcome" that covers this sort of thing, the move violates a constraint on the types of outcomes that can sensibly figure in the Dependence Thesis.

Consider, then, the other sort of explanation a production theorist might offer to account for Marge's irrationality. Perhaps she has violated some standard of rationality that applies to her reasoning, or to the way her attitudes cohere with one another, but that does not impugn the claim that she had a reason to smoke. It is possible, after all, to be irrational in forming an intention to do what one in fact has reason to do.²¹

The problem for this type of explanation will be to identify the relevant rational requirement that Marge is violating in this case. There does not appear to be any inconsistency among her beliefs, or between her beliefs and her intentions. She is not intending means she knows to be insufficient for her end.²²

It is tempting to think that Marge is somehow *akratic* or weak willed. To the extent that this is plausible, I think it is because it seems so obvious that she should not smoke as a way of bringing herself to go to the store unless for some reason she cannot bring herself to go to the store immediately. But this is the very intuition we are trying to explain. To appeal to it in order to support a charge of *akrasia* would beg the question.

There is also a principled objection to the production theorist's appeal to this third way of explaining the case. It is extremely plausible that if an agent arrives

20 Cf. Korsgaard, "The Myth of Egoism."

21 There is a large literature on the distinction between what rationality requires of one and what one has reason to do or think. See, for example, Broome, *Rationality through Reasoning*; Brunero, "The Scope of Rational Requirements"; Kolodny, "Why Be Rational?"; Parfit, "Rationality and Reasons"; and Scanlon, "Structural Irrationality."

22 For discussion of these and related requirements of practical rationality, see Bratman, *Intentions, Plans, and Practical Reason*.

at justified conclusions about what she has good reason to do, and decides what to do on that basis, then she has reasoned well. But if we assume the production view is correct, then this is just what Marge has done. This would mean that the production conception is incompatible with even this minimal connection between good practical reasoning and the normative reasons that apply to an agent. To offer an account of reasons for action that had so little to do with practical thought and deliberation would be tantamount to changing the subject.

I conclude that the best explanation of what has gone wrong in Marge's case is that the desirability of her buying groceries gives her no reason to smoke her cigarettes. And this is incompatible with what a production-oriented account would imply about the reasons Marge has in this case.

5. ACTING FOR THE RIGHT REASONS

If the argument of the last section is sound, the reason Marge has to buy groceries—to perform that action—is not equivalent or reducible to a reason for her to do something that will have the result that she buys groceries. But this leaves us with a further question. Why does Marge's need for groceries not give her a reason to smoke? Why should the fact that her smoking will promote a desirable outcome not count at all in favor of doing it?

Some further explanation is needed, especially since this fact would seem to give someone in her situation good reason to smoke if we were to suppose that she would otherwise be too lazy or forgetful to go to the store. Such self-manipulative activity is not necessarily irrational.²³ Most of us engage in some form of it from time to time. One might deliberately avoid a certain topic of conversation, knowing that it tends to get one so worked up that one behaves badly. Or one might make a bet with a friend that one will stick to one's diet, hoping this will counteract the temptation to overeat. There are often good reasons to take such measures (even if those reasons are sometimes outweighed by other considerations). Why should things look so different in Marge's case?

In response, we can begin by noting that, when Marge smokes her remaining cigarettes, her intention is to introduce a new motive or reason for her to go to the store, beyond her need for groceries. She gets herself to go to the store; but when she does go, she goes in order to buy cigarettes, not groceries. She thus brings herself to go, not for the reason she takes to show that she should go, but for some other reason.

It is plausible, however, that acting *for* the reasons that normatively support

23 See, however, the discussion of this question in Julius, "The Possibility of Exchange" and "Reconstruction."

one's actions is an ideal of rational agency.²⁴ More precisely, it seems that if some consideration counts decisively in favor of one's performing a particular action then one should perform the action on the basis of that consideration. In choosing to act as she does, Marge flouts this ideal. She brings herself to do what she has decisive reason to do, but she arranges it so that she will not do it on the grounds that rationally support her act in the first place.

Now, someone who acts as Marge does will fail with respect to this standard whether we suppose that she smokes because she believes she will otherwise fail to get herself to the store, or whether we stipulate that she has no such concern. Still, there is a difference between two ways of imagining the case. If we assume, on the one hand, that someone (let us call her Midge) is attempting to ensure that she does not fail to do what she thinks she should do, then we are not prevented from attributing to her some awareness of the fact that, ideally, she would go to the store for the reason that establishes that this is something she should do. We can attribute this recognition to her since, we may suppose, were Midge to regard herself as fully capable of going for this reason—were she not expecting to fail in exactly this respect—she would see no reason to smoke as a way of bringing herself to go. It is not that she fails to grasp the ideal, it is just that she regards it as temporarily out of her reach.

By contrast, Marge, as we were imagining her, appears simply to be indifferent as to whether or not she goes to the store for the "right" reasons. She sees no obstacle to acting directly on the reason that counts (decisively) in favor of going. That is (we have stipulated), she regards herself as perfectly capable of going to the store in order to buy groceries. And yet she chooses the less direct route. This implies that, although the feature of her act that she sees as making it worth performing is that it will enable her to purchase groceries, she fails to see this as a consideration *on the basis of which* she should go. In this way, it seems she fails to grasp fully the import of the relevant consideration as one that provides her with a reason to act.

I want to suggest that this helps explain the intuitive difference between Marge's unnecessary self-manipulation and Midge's attempt to deal with her own faulty agency. When it comes to Midge, it makes sense to assume that, in taking some consideration to provide her with a decisive reason to act, she understands it as a reason that, ideally, she would act on. My conjecture is that this understanding is partly constitutive of the judgment or recognition that some-

24 Compare the discussion in Markovits, "Acting for the Right Reasons," concerning the connection between morally worthy action and acting on the basis of the specific reasons that count in favor of one's action. For a very interesting argument linking something like this ideal with a certain form of freedom, see Julius, "Reconstruction."

thing counts as a decisive reason for an action. This would explain why Marge's thought and decision make so little sense to us. She appears to take a certain reason to show that she should act in a particular way, while at the same time she does not take it to be a reason that, if possible, she should act on. But this is an incoherent stance to take toward the relevant consideration. It is as though she both does and does not regard her need for groceries as a decisive reason for her to go to the store.

Because Marge knows that she can go directly to the store in order to buy her groceries, it would be irrational for her to regard her need for groceries as equally providing her with a reason to smoke, and thereby bring herself to go to the store, since that would have the effect of her going, not in order to buy groceries, but in order to get cigarettes. My claim is that the irrationality here is best explained by the fact that the latter is ruled out by the concept of a (decisive) reason for action. If that is right then it would seem to follow that the productive link between smoking and the purchase of groceries provides no reason at all for Marge to smoke.

6. CONCLUSION

I argued in section 3 that the production conception cannot make sense of the idea that, in some circumstances, what practical reason requires or recommends is not just an act's performance, but an act's being motivated in certain ways. The problem was, roughly, that it makes no sense to regard such a requirement or recommendation in terms of some outcome one has reason to bring about.

I have just argued that, quite generally, judging that some consideration provides one with a reason for action commits one to the proposition that what it requires or recommends is action that is motivated in a certain way. There thus appears to be a deep difference between rational action, on the one hand, and, on the other, the mere production of events or states of affairs one has reason to want. We cannot fully understand the former in terms of the latter. As we have seen, an agent who regards her reasons for action *merely* as reasons to produce a state of affairs in which she does what the reasons indicate she should do has failed to fully grasp the sense in which she has decisive reason to act. We cannot really understand our reasons for action so long as we think of our actions merely as means of production.

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