CONTEXTUAL REASON AND RATIONALITY

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

In *Internal and External Reasons*, Bernard Williams proposes a speculative argument for the idea that internal reasons are the only kind of normative reason, and that his counterfactual internal interpretation is the only truth condition for both kinds of reason-statements, H and S (H: "A has a reason to φ" and S: "There is a reason for A to φ"). He takes for granted, however, that internal and external reasons are the only possible kinds of normative reasons at work: his argument is therefore question-begging against a externalism—yet this is only the lesser problem faced by reason internalism. The main problems for Williams's argument are his semantical reduction of S to H (which entails his question-begging argument) and his *ad hoc* interpretation of H in terms of his stipulative account of internal reasons. The most serious problem for both reason internalism and reason externalism, however, is represented by certain moral counterintuitive examples on both sides, which could be considered as the central problem in the debate.

In this thesis, after showing Williams's argument to be question-begging, I first explain his failure to unify two irreducible questions (on the nature of normative reasons and on the nature of rationality) as well as to reduce the truth conditions of S to H. Then, through conceptual analysis, I show that William's internalist interpretation of H is false, and that the commonsensical interpretation of H is one that I call contextual interpretation in terms of contextual reasons. Internal reasons are just one usage of H, and contextual reasons are the real rival to external reasons in the debate on normative reason.

Secondly, I argue that the two distinct notions of rationality— *relative* (instrumental) rationality and *absolute* rationality—require two distinct truth conditions, and the central problem deals only with the absolute one. I hope to show that reason contextualism, defined in terms of contextual reasons (i.e., neither internal nor external reasons) provides us with the best explication of these two distinct notions of rationality, and that the contextual interpretation accommodates all the counterexamples associated with the central problem.

DEDICATION

TO MY PARENTS WITH LOVE

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CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION AND REASON INTERNALISM

In the three decades since the publication of Williams's *Internal and External Reasons* (IER), a debate has flourished on the obscurity or necessity of *reason internalism* as well as the possibility or impossibility of its rival, *reason externalism*. There is also a huge debate on the moral badness or instrumental goodness of internal reasons. This debate indicates the significance of the concept of internal reasons, and its practical implications and moral entailments. The debate, *prima facie*, looks like an epistemic and "reason"-oriented one, and the debate's contributors have sought to set out the truth conditions of various reason-statements on the basis of their theories about the definition (or nature) of normative (or justificatory) reasons as opposed to motivating and explanatory reasons. This discussion has deep roots, which can be traced back to the significant historical conflict between Humeans and Kantians on the nature of morality and rationality.

Williams begins IER by considering two kinds of propositions ("A has a reason to φ" and "There is a reason for A to φ") which I call respectively 'H' and 'S', and he supposes that each of H and S "admits" two interpretations, one internal and one external. Then, proposing a speculative argument, he tries to demonstrate the impossibility of external reasons, and hence to prove his reason internalism.

In this debate, then, we are concerned with two irreducible questions: (1) What is the correct interpretation of H and S? and (2) Which kinds of reasons can legitimately be included in the notion of rationality as well as of moral judgment? In the first question we are looking for the commonsensical truth conditions of H and S, and seeking to find the

correct theory of normative reason. As is well known, reason internalism and reason externalism are the two classic options available in answering this question. However, in the second question we are called upon to give a theory about the nature of rationality and moral judgment on the basis of which of the theories was selected in answer to the first question. Thus, in the second question, we are to adopt a particular of kind of reason (internal, external, or some other kind of reason) as a criterion for rationality and moral judgment.

The answers to these two questions are related. If reason internalism is true, then it follows that internal reasons are the only reason at work, and consequently are the only reasons that could be taken as a criterion for our rational and moral judgments. In contrast, by accepting reason externalism, we reject the radical idea of reason internalism and make room for external interpretations as well as external reasons. Then, we could take external reasons as a criterion for the notion of rational and moral judgments as well.

Indeed, by proposing an argument against the very possibility of external reasons, Williams intended to disarm the philosophical soldiers who have defended Kant and, if he should succeed, would win a prize for the Humean veterans concerning the nature of morality. By proving the impossibility of external reasons, he would prove the impossibility of any external theory about rationality and moral judgment. So, on a closer look, it seems that this debate is a morality-oriented debate as well.

In the first chapter, first, I briefly define reason internalism (both actual and counterfactual versions), and explain William's theory of rationality in terms of his account of *internal reasons*. Then, in the second chapter, I explain reason externalism, this

being the classic rival to reason internalism; and we will see how McDowell tries to challenge reason internalism by proposing the counterexample of *conversion*. We will also review William's reply to McDowell.

The third chapter is dedicated to the central moral problem in the debate. I review some counterintuitive examples which neither reason internalism nor reason externalism debate can accommodate, and I discuss the moral considerations of both camps in this conflict—which, considered from the outward perspective is epistemic and "reason"-oriented, while from the inward perspective it is morality-oriented. Moreover, we will see why normativity plays a key role in this debate, and how the central problem concerns the level of normativity in these theories.

In chapter 4 I prove the falsity of reason internalism. I first discuss the irreducibility of the above-mentioned questions (i.e., 1 and 2). Then, contra Williams and his followers, I show that neither H and S can "admit" of two interpretations. We thus have two semantically separate reason-statements, and correspondingly two different truth conditions. I explore four possibilities for accounting for how we might have two truth conditions for one sentence (as Williams assumes), and show that none of them are applicable, and also that H and S are not semantically irreducible. It is not possible for any of them to "admit" two interpretations. Then I discuss Williams's argument against reason externalism, showing that it is question-begging, and that it can be explained away in terms of the distinction between "having a reason" and "there being a reason" for something.

Chapter 5 is the goal of this thesis: here I argue for *contextual reasons* and a corresponding account of *contextual rationality*. In this chapter, coming back to the first

question, and via a conceptual analysis of "having a reason," I hope to respond to the first question about the truth conditions of the two irreducible reason-statements expressed in H and S. The distinction between "having a reason" and "there is a reason" for something has been considered by a number of authors (for example, Cohon 1986, Zangwill 2003, Goldman 2005, Schroeder 2008); however, my conceptual analysis of "having a reason" differs from them in various aspects. Williams's so-called internal interpretation of "A has a reason to φ" is semantically false, I argue, since there is no such thing as an "internal reason" except in a merely stipulative sense. I argue that an agent has a reason *iff* she is *aware* of that reason and she understands it (not, as Williams claims, necessarily being *motivated* by), or it is contextually *possible* for her to be aware of and to understand it (not even having *actual* awareness) through internal deliberation or external exploration. I call this interpretation a *contextual* one, which is dependent upon a conception of a contextual reason. The contextual reason is the genuine rival to the external reason, and so, it turns out, the real debate is that between the *contextual reasons* and *external reasons*. Needless to say, even though the internal interpretation is false, as will be shown in chapter 4, and reason internalism is impossible, we can admit stipulated internal reasons as defined by Williams.

Then, I come back to the second question, seeking to show which kind of reason can legitimately be deployed in rational or moral judgments. To answer this question, first, we need to distinguish between the *relative* (also referred to as the instrumental or calculative) notion of reason and the *absolute* notion of reason, and correspondingly the distinction between *relative rationality* and *absolute rationality*. The contextual interpretation

provides us with the best grounds here, and the *contextual reason* is the most intuitive answer to this question. In the last section of this chapter (5.3), I show how rationality and moral judgments based on contextual reasons (i.e., *contextual* rationality and moral judgment) help us with the central problem in the debate, by showing how it accommodates counterexamples which both camps have long struggled with.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the application of this new approach on normative reason in the sub-discipline of instrumental reasoning in decision theory. In this chapter, we will see how contextualism helps us to provide the best explanation for some counterexamples to the classical approach in decision theory, which I call invariantism.

1.1 Reason internalism

In *Internal and External Reason* (IER), Williams proposes his influential theory of reason internalism. He argues, metaethically, for what considerations can be legitimately called reasons for actions. After proposing two major interpretations of internal and external ones, Williams, following Hume (based on the standard interpretation) or Davidson (as interpreted in Finlay 2009), extremely claims that all considerations, which are capable of being called a reason for someone to do something, are internal reasons, and the only true reason-statements are those involved with an internal interpretation. According to Williams, "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), and he modified his theory of normative reason in two ways. First, sometimes an agent *has* a reason; however, just because she is ignorant of it, she is not actually motivated toward action by that reason. Secondly, in the case of false belief, an agent comes to be motivated towards an action, while she *lacks* any reason for that action. Williams takes internal reason as the criterion for rationality, moral responsibility, moral judgment, blameworthiness, and prudentiality (Williams, 1989). He also recognizes reason externalism - which says "there is no such condition, and the reason–sentence will not be falsified by the absence of an appropriate motive" (Williams, 1979, 101) - as a self-contradictory theory. In what follows I will elaborate on Williams' reason internalism, the concept of deliberation in his theory, and his objection to reason externalism.

1.2 Definition of internal reason

In the second page of IER, Williams states that:

> "[It might be thought] 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)

Williams proposes two constraints for the internal reason- explanatory condition and rationality. He starts his definition of internal reason (which is the essential constitutive of his theory of rationality) with the explanatory condition. The explanatory is the substantial feature of motivating reason, and it clearly shows his inclination to defend the strong connection between internal reason and motivation. So, he starts his definition with two sub-Humean definitions, and after that, he adds the rationality constraint as the second constitution of the internal reason. So, Williams starts with an actual definition of internal reason and gradually switch to his final counterfactual definition on internal reason.

1.2.1 Actual definition of internal reason

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

'A has a reason to φ'

'There is a reason for A to φ'

Then, he proposes two interpretations as 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 emphasizes 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) Afterward, 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 sub-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 is clear, in the first model, 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 shows the difference between Hume's viewpoint and William's perspective on this issue.

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. This definition is dependent just on the explanatory condition, and It is compatible with Hume's explanation for internal reason. When Hume says that "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions" he intends that our motivational set is the only cause for our reasons for actions. However, Williams proposed a counterexample for the second conception of internal reason and he adds "rationality" as the second condition for internal reason. Actually, by adding rationality, he wants to increase the normative dimension of the definition to make it more plausible.

1.2.2 Counterexample of gin and petrol

Here, he proposes a counterexample for the second model; and on the basis of that, he rejects the model. 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 a reason. This answer is based on the second sub-Humean model. (b)

According to Williams, an explanation is not sensitive to the truth. It is just based on the agent's belief. So, in this case, the agent has just an 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 considers that agent as an irrational one. He emphasizes that internal reasons have two important dimensions: normative dimension and explanatory dimension. So, he

believes that the first sub-Humean model is more plausible and he tries to give a more accurate definition which we can call it as counterfactual definition of internal reason.

1.2.3 The counterfactual definition of internal reason

At this point, he starts to give his more precise definition (i.e., some reformed version of the first sub-Humean model (a)) of internal reasoning. To do so, he proposes some conditions which all of them are taken into account to form his final theory on reason and rationality. He presents his conditions in terms of four propositions respectively (S refers to the agent's motivational set).

1- Connection with the agent's subjective motivational set: "An internal reason statement is falsified by the absence of some appropriate element from S" (Williams, 1979, 102)

2- Disconnection with the agent's false believes: "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- Awareness of available and acceptable facts about himself: "A may not know some true internal reason statement about himself." (Williams, 1979, 103)

4- Acceptability for the agent: Internal reason statements can be discovered in deliberative reasoning. (Williams, 1979, 104)

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

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

Before Williams, Hume's statements of "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions," was largely accepted as the necessity and sufficiency of desires for having reasons. We can formulate it like $(S \equiv I)$; however, as his first reformation (in the second condition), after proposing the *gin and tonic* counterexample, Williams proposes a less extreme subjective definition for internal reason and says "the absence of some appropriate element from S" is a sufficient reason for the lack of internal reason (i.e., $\sim S \supset \sim I$), or using a contraposition we can say that internal reason is sufficient for the existence of a motivation $(I \supset S)$.

The counterexample of gin and tonic is intended to show that there can be a motivation (to drink the mixed stuff), while, there is no internal reason (for drinking the stuff). Williams believes that she has no internal reason in this situation. He inputs his second condition here, i.e., the agent's rationality. He explains the rationality of the agent with a double formulation (2 and 3), and he believes in the equivalency of rationality and having an internal reason based on his definition.

In the second condition, he picks out that sometimes an agent may falsely believe that has an internal reason, and she has no that in fact. Likewise, In the third proposition, he states that an agent may be ignorant of a fact and a true internal reason which she really has, but she is not aware of this having reason.

In 4, Williams states a very important distinction between his definition of with a basic and classical definition of rationality in decision theory. He emphasizes that *accessible reason* (for the agent) at the moment of action is not an accurate criterion for having an 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 believes or ignorance).

In his new formulation, Williams wants to stress on both the motivational (or explanatory) dimension (in 1) and normative rationality (in 2 and 3) of his definition of internal reason. in 4, he states that such acceptable reason can be discovered through deliberative reasoning. By this condition, he avoids any reason which is unacceptable for the agent even after the deliberation process. In other words, there is some reason 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 an internal reason and doesn't consider an agent who denies such a reason as being an irrational agent.

1.2.4 Williams' theory of rationality

Rationality for Williams goes beyond motivational reasons, and this is what distinguishes normative reasoning from. 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 we can't see any kind of normativity in that case at all.

Williams considers two possible definitions of rationality, and he defends the second one.

1- Humean rationality on the basis of accessible reason: this is the most extreme internalist definition of rationality which is dependent on the best reason which is *accessible* to the agent at the moment of φ-ing. Williams, proposing two counterexamples gin and tonic and ignorant agent, rejects this definition for the lack of any sense of normativity)

2- Williams' internalist rationality: which refers to action based on the best reason which is *acceptable* for the agent if he is exposed to it in that situation. Note that such a reason could be inaccessible for the agent at the moment of action because of the ignorance or be having 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 would stop drinking it. So at that moment, he has no internal reason for her action, however, he has rationality based on the first definition.

1.2.5 Deliberation or rational deliberation

Williams, in his final condition for rationality, proposes the important conception of deliberative reasoning. This concept is one of the most important concepts in this debate, and I will come back to this in section 2.3 as well.

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.

1.2.6 Williams vs. Hume

Williams' theory (in its standard reading) is distinguished from his Humean ancestor by an extended notion of desire (i.e. *subjective motivational set*) and a new conception of instrumental rationality. He defines subjective motivational set more liberally than the actual desires, so it includes desire-like mental states as well as

inclinations, beliefs, dispositions, etc. So, in some sense, it is not necessarily incompatible with some moral agent who would follow Kantian categorical imperative, *iff* the agent is motivated by them; however, even in this case, we have just extensional equality between internal and external reason, and it doesn't follow that the agent has an external reason. Furthermore, his conception of instrumental rationality involves both objective and subjective reason, which is clear in both examples of gin and tonic and ignorant agent. Before IER, it was generally assumed that the Humean theory of reason is dealing just with subjective reasons (M.Schroeder, 2008).

1.3 Williams' argument for reason internalism

At first, Williams tries to interpret external reason based on Kant categorical imperative. However, he finds that there is an important difference between categorical imperative and these alternatives which is called external reasons. The categorical imperative is related to morality, and they are necessarily moral maxims. However, the external reason is more general and are not restricted just to moral maxims. So, they are not equivalent to the categorical imperative. Then, he gives an argument to prove that there is no such thing which is called external reason.

I will discuss Williams' argument in chapter 4 in more details. However, just for my goal in this chapter, I will state it briefly. Using two M.T., he tries to infer the conclusion that there are no external reasons. We can formulate his argument as follows.

1. If there is a reason, then it should explain… (Each reason has two dimensions, explanatory and rationality)

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 such a reason called external reason.

He says: "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)

1.4 Explanation of some examples based on reason internalism

1- A question about S (i.e. the agent's motivational set): If an agent is really uninterested in pursuing what he "needs"!

There is an objection here to 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 Williams' 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 gets fully aware of this, and it couldn't motivate her. So, according to Williams, there is no internal reason for her to follow. She doesn't violate any internal reason, and she is not an irrational person.

2- Owen Wingrave story:

"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 discussion, and it means that such reasons are not *acceptable* for him, and he is not counted as an irrational person. However, if he joins the army without any motivation (if it is possible), he would be an irrational person based on William's theory.

CHAPTER II: REASON EXTERNALISM

2.1 Reason externalism

Reason externalism, in contrast, is not committed to the above-mentioned condition for *having a reason* and it defines reasons for an action independently of an agent's motivational set. Reason externalism is not extreme in the sense that the only reasons for actions are to be external, or that all of the true reason-statements are those with external interpretations. It also doesn't include all the extensions of practical reason (like in the case that you want to eat chocolate ice cream, so you do it). It is roughly limited just to some universal moral or rational rules like the Kantian categorical imperative. However, reason externalism is also, in some other sense, extreme. It states that *all* agents, in its limited scope, have reason to do something, no matter whether they are *motivated by* these reasons or not, and no matter whether they could make any sense of the reasons or not. According to the reason externalism, all people, regardless of the contexts in which they are, are equally responsible for their actions. They take the external reason as a criterion for rationality, moral responsibility, moral judgment, fair blames and prudential reasoning.

Furthermore, external rationality is defined by acting based on the facts and external reasons. In this case, we take "third-personal" view as the fictive and external view. This conception of rationality assumes the maximum level of normativity and is defended by most externalist including MacDowell. such a rationality is closed to the *right* decision in decision theory.

2.2 Williams offers a possibility to externalists

After proposing his arguments against the existence of external reasons, he tries to make room for the possibility of some kinds of external ones. In this part, he proposes two conditions 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) Then, he says:

> "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)

Brunero reformulates 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 the first motivation and

the secondary motivation." (Berunero, 2007, 24)

2.2.1 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 states:

"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 a condition can be met. I

will elaborate on his view in section 4.3.

2.3 McDowell's objection to Williams' internalism

McDowell, one of the most important contemporary externalist, agrees with the two

parts of William's statement about GER and RMR. He believes that to have an external

reason it should not be derivable from any elements of S. 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 commitment of the external theorist to this condition. He states that there is no reason for such a commitment especially the part of "rationally deliberated." McDowell thinks that Williams is right to believe that an 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 the concept of *conversion* as an *irrational* deliberation which leads to the new motivation toward action. (McDowell, 1995)

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)

And he also says:

"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." (Brunero, 2007, 26)

McDowell states that externalist is not committed to rational deliberation . An agent can be motivated by an irrational one like conversion. And such an irrational deliberation is not connected with the agent's original S.

2.4 Williams' reply to MacDowell

In *Reply to MacDowell*, Williams, cast 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 the external reason. MacDowell "states that there is no reason for such commitment especially the part of "rationally deliberated." And he proposes conversion as an irrational deliberation and as a 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 to 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. He says:

> "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)

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

> "The assumption, he [McDowell] 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 said 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 explicitly says:

"I do not think that my argument presupposes quite what McDowell says that it presupposes ... 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)

CHAPTER III: THE PROBLEM IN THE DEBATE

The central problems in the debate of external and internal reason, however, are not some logical or transcendental arguments which are proposed by both sides for their ideas or against the opposing opinion. Even though some part of the literature dedicated to the confirmation or refutation of such arguments, the central problem refers to some moral considerations which traced back to the major conflicts between the Humean theory of reason and Kantian categorical imperatives or other universal rational rules. The commonsensical and intuitional counterexamples in both sides are the most significant problem which both sides have dealing with even after defending of the formal aspects of their arguments. Some of these counterexamples have explicitly mentioned in the literature, however, the point is the reproducibility of such problems. As we will see, the lack of the normative balance in both sides ends up in some counter examples in both camps.

3.1 Counterexamples for reason internalism

The rationale of most externalists is moral considerations. They believe, by *reductio ad absurdum*, that if they could not resist internalist's radical view (that there are no such things as an external reason), it entails some disastrous conclusion for moral realism and moral absolutism. However, since practical reason is not limited to moral action and also due to the controversy of moral objectivity, the same consideration is also extended to some prudential reasons. Externalists believe that Hitler had several (moral) reasons to not murder millions of innocent people no matter what motivation and desires

he had. In contrast, according to the internalists, he had such reasons *iff* he was motivated to by those reasons. Another example, which is proposed by Williams, is that, according to the reason internalism, a man who is not motivated by some considerations to treat his wife well has no reason to do this. However, according to reason externalism, he has some reason to do this, no matter whether he is motivated by those considerations or not.

3.2 Counterexamples for reason externalism

The rationale of reason internalism is also some moral considerations, and there are some moral counterintuitive examples against externalism as well. One of the most important moral motivations of Williams' internalism is to defend the dignity of human beings and prevent externalists to simply ascribe all the agents (of irrational/immoral action) equally to being irrational and being immoral, regardless of their mental states and desires. Protecting people from such a negative attitude (i.e., simply accusing people irrespective of their motivations) would be itself one of the major moral responsibilities for which we all are responsible. Consider a person in a primitive tribe who doesn't know anything about liberal democracy, and she has no such conception in her mind at all. She naturally resists all arguments for liberal democracy as the best political structure to govern every society. Given that it is the best, according to externalists, she is an irrational and immoral person. However, according to Williams' reason internalism, we are not legitimate to accuse her of being irrational if she is not motivated by the arguments. Williams believes that external considerations are not a good criterion for our judgment

irrespective to the agent's mental states. We should analyze her being rational and moral in terms of the reasons which are *acceptable* for her at that moment.

3.3 The role of normativity in the debate

It seems that the conflict between reason internalism and reason externalism refers to the level of normativity. Williams' internalism assumes the minimum level of rationality and reason externalism invokes 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 acknowledges 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 form 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 still 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 it 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)

Humean theory on practical reason is fully descriptive, however, Williams's sub-Humean reason internalism is not as subjective as his ancestor. But, Williams' reason internalism is still too psychological and it includes the minimum level of normativity. In

the contrary, the reason externalism is depended upon the maximum level of normativity which is completely mind-independent and agent-independent. It seems that the lack of the normative balance in the debate make a room to reproduce a verity of counter examples for both sides, and as long as we don't solve this basic problem, we will not get rid of such superstructure problems.

CHAPTER IV: TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENT VS. LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

Consider 'H' as the following kind of proposition: "A has a reason to φ" and 'S' as the following kind of proposition: "There is a reason for A to φ". We then encounter two important questions: 1- what is the true interpretation of H and S? and 2- which kind of reason would be legitimate to be granted in the notion of rationality as well as moral judgment? In the first question, we are just dealing with the commonsensical truth conditions of the reason-statements, and we are looking for the most plausible theory about the normative reason (traditionally, reason internalism or reason externalism are the two rivals). However, in the second question, we are asked to take one of these theories as a ground for our theory on the nature of rationality and moral action; or we are expected to take one kind of reason (traditionally, *internal reason* or *external reason*) as a criterion for rationality and our moral judgments - when we ascribe being rational/irrational or being moral/immoral to a certain agent.

The answers to these two questions are roughly related to each other. If reason internalism is true, then it leads to the fact that internal reason is the only reason at work, and consequently, it is the only kind of reason could be taken as a criterion for our rational and moral judgments. In contrast, by accepting reason externalism, you reject the radical idea of reason internalism and make room for external interpretation as well as external reason. Then, you could take external reason as a criterion for the notion of rational and moral judgments as well. Indeed, by proposing an argument against the possibility of external reason, it seems that Williams intended to disarm Kantian soldiers and, if he

succeeded, he would get a big booty for Humean veterans on the nature of moral action. By proving the impossibility of external reason, he would prove the impossibility of any external theory about rationality and moral judgment. So, at a closer look, it seems that this huge debate is a moral-oriented debate as well.

Williams was not successful, and as some contributors (see, Cohon (1986), Finlay (2009)) have argued, his argument is question-begging, or it fails to prove his theory of *reason internalism* - the radical idea that the only true interpretation for both H and S is internal interpretation. Furthermore, by some distinction like that between "having a reason" and "there is a reason for," his argument can be explained away (Zangwill (2003), Cohon (1986)). However, my objection, in some senses, is more fundamental and different from other critics. Even though reason internalism is false, it does not follow that there is not any internal reason at all; it does still work for some cases, like when you would like to eat a chocolate ice cream, and you do in fact eat it. However, as we shall see, the internal reason is just one usage of H, and it plays no role in H's truth conditions.

I believe that being question-begging or ignoring the distinction between "having a reason" and "there is a reason for," are just two superficial problems with Williams' reason internalism. The fundamental problems are two things. First, his semantical reduction of S to H which, entails the implausibility of reason internalism. Secondly, his *ad hoc* interpretation of H in terms of his stipulative internal reason.

Concerning these fundamental problems, we might ask "might there be an internal reason?!" instead of McDowell's question of "might there be an external reason?". As it

will be argued in chapter 4, there is no such a thing, which is called internal reason, in common language.

Williams begins his theory with two illegitimate reductions. First, he reduces the second above-mentioned question to the first one; i.e. 2- "which kind of reason would be legitimate to be granted in the notion of rationality as well as moral judgment?" to 1- "what is the true interpretation of H and S?". Second, the semantical reduction of the reason-statement of S (for which external interpretation is more natural) to H (where he claims of which the internal interpretation is more natural).

Then, he struggled to give a reductionist and speculative answer to the first question, which is apparently an epistemic and linguistic question – "what is the true interpretation of the reason-statements of H and S?".

He supposes that each of these two reason-statements could "admit" two interpretations of internal and external, and by saying that, he intends to reduce the more general sentence of S to H (this is the wrong semantical reduction to which I will come back).

He simply answers the first question with his *ad hoc* and the stipulative notion of internal reason, and then, tries to support it through a speculative argument, instead of referring to the most commonsensical linguistic extensions. It is not surprising why such a speculative attempt for the stipulative notion of internal reason, would result in a question-begging argument.

Williams believes in two explanatory and normative dimension of any normative reason. He takes "having a reason" equal to "having a motivation", and takes "belief" as

the required psychological connection between a consideration and an agent to meet the explanatory dimension's condition for the normative reason. However, as we will see in chapter 5, this condition is too narrow, and it excludes a variety of commonsensical extensions. I shall argue that the more liberal relation of "contextual understanding" is the most commonsensical truth condition for "having a reason", no matter whether you are motivated by that reason or not.

Williams amplified his mistakes by offering his *ad hoc* and stipulated internal reason as the criterion of rationality and moral judgment in response to the second reduced question – "which kind of reason would be legitimate to be granted in our rational or moral judgment?"

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the irreducibility of the above-mentioned questions. In spite of Williams and his followers, I will show that none of H and S can "admit" two interpretations, and we have two, semantically, separate reason-statements, and correspondingly two different truth conditions. I will explore four possibilities of having two truth conditions for one sentence (as Williams assumes), and I will show that none of them are applicable, and H and S are not semantically irreducible. It is not possible for any of them to "admit" two interpretations. Furthermore, I will explore the impossibility of every internalist theory which presupposed the possibility of having two truth conditions for one sentence.

Then, I will briefly explain Williams' argument against reason externalism, and I will show why it is question-begging, and how it could be explained away in terms of the distinction between "having a reason" and "there is a reason for."

4.1 Irreducibility of two questions

It seems that Williams and some of his followers in this debate, both proponent and opponent, presuppose that they can solve the historical conflicts between Humeans and Kantians if they could fix their theories, in a reductionist manner and at a more fundamental level, on the notion of "reason" based on either desires (for internalists) or values (for externalists). However, here we encounter two irreducible questions of "What is the true interpretation of H and S?" and "Which kind of reason would be legitimate to be granted in the notion of rationality and moral judgment?"

Williams believes that "the internal reasons conception is concerned with the agent's rationality" (Williams, 1979, 101), and he would merge these two questions. By presupposing his idea on the notion of rationality (given the level of normativity that he believes is sufficient and necessary for "rationality") he wants to give one and the same answer to these two distinct (but still related) questions _ hitting two birds with one stone. His reason internalism is based on his notion of rationality, and vice-versa (Goldman, 2005, 510).

Indeed, the objects of these two questions are obviously two distinct things of "normative reason" and "rationality." Even though they are, in one sense or another, related to each other, it doesn't follow that they have necessarily the same answers.

Furthermore, as we shall see (in section 5.2.1), we have some kind of normative 'reason' (i.e., *absolute* reason) which is fully irrelevant to Williams' notion of rationality (i.e., instrumental rationality).

4.2 The impossibility of reason internalism

Williams's reason internalism is dependent on his radical argument against the possibility of any kind of external reason. Williams, as we saw in section 4.3, argues that every putative external reason would be a case of internal reason. His practical theory, as we will see in the following sections, is dependent on an unsubstantiated assumption of the possibility of having two truth conditions for one sentence. In what follows I will elaborate on the semantical impossibility of this assumption, and consequently on the impossibility of every reason internalism which is depended on such an assumption. Moreover, as I will show, in section 4.3, that his argument is question-begging, and it is not surprising that every transcendental attempt to argue for an impossible idea would end up to a fallacious argument like questing begging one.

4.2.1 "having a reason" vs "there is a reason for": Irreducibility of two reason-statements of H and S.

In the first page of IER, Williams states that there are two kinds of reason-statements:

1- H: "A has a reason to φ" (so-called *internal reason-statements)*

2- S: "There is a reason for A to φ" (*external reason-statements)*

(we can naturally paraphrase the second one as 2*: "a reason for A to φ exists")

Williams has been noticed that there are two kinds of reason-statements in ordinary language, and he says "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). He doesn't clarify what is meant by the possibility of one sentence "admitting" two (both more natural and less natural) interpretations. I will show, by considering four possibilities, that it is by no means plausible in ordinary language.

4.2.2 The impossibility of having two truth conditions for one sentence

First, by "admitting," he might intend just a loosely speaking sense. However, it is clear that this kind of sense is irrelevant to the discussion in which, we are exploring the accurate truth conditions of such reason-statements.

Secondly, he might want to claim that there are two distinct truth conditions corresponding to two distinct semantical and conceptual contents of one sentence (i.e. each reason-statement has two distinct contents). Consider when you are asked, simultaneously, by two persons, about two different things, while the first questioner says "Is philosophy the best way of life?" and the second questioner says "would you marry me?" Then, you

are answering simultaneously to them by one "Yes!" You are using the sentence "Yes!" to express two fully distinct contents. It is not impossible; however, it is not a usual way of speaking which is intended in the practical reasoning debate, and it excludes almost all the stories in the debate.

The third option is that H and S have the same contents, and literally, they are just disguised versions of each other; that is they are semantically equivalent. It looks a counterintuitive account, however, let's evaluate that based on more exact syntactical relations. It looks, as put forth by traditional logic and English grammar, the predicate phrase of the first sentence is "has a reason to φ," and we are ascribing the predicate to the subject 'A' (the agent); however, the predicate phrase of the second sentence is "there is" (or, more naturally, "exists" in the paraphrased version of 2*), and it is ascribed to the subject phrase of "a reason for A to φ." – Two commonsensical inequivalent predicates. Given Ax= x is an agent, Ry= y is a reason to φ, Hxy= x have y, and Fyx= y is for x, the formal translations of the two reason-statements, respectively, are:

1'- ($\exists$x) (Ax . ($\exists$y) (Ry. Hxy))

2'- ($\exists$y) (Ry . ($\exists$x) (Ax. Fyx))

we can reformulate 1', into a still deeper level, and write it as follows:

1"- ($\exists$x) (Ax . ($\exists$y) (Ry. Fyx . Hxy)).

Then, even though we can, syntactically, get 2' from 1", however, they are still nonequivalent, and by no means, we can, syntactically, get 1" from 2'. So, the third possible account doesn't work either. This non-equivalency is for the sake of the difference between the two relationships of Hxy and Fyx. There can be a reason for you of which you are not aware, and so it is not available for you. Exactly like that, *there is* a way for us to cure all kinds of long and bronchial cancer, however, we don't *have* that just because of the limitation of our medical science right now.

The fourth and more probable, interpretation of "admitting" in Williams' statement, is the fact that each reason-statements can "admit" two truth conditions in terms of sentence stress (as opposed to lexical stress). In what follows I will elaborate on this account.

The grammatical subject of "A has a reason to φ" is A. When we are asserting it, we presuppose that there is an A, and according to the *factoring* account, we are claiming two things about A; a reason for A to φ, and a relationship between A and that reason (M.Schroeder, 2008).[1] In the natural reading of declarative sentences, the existence of the grammatical subject is presupposed, and the emphasis is (naturally, or sometimes with a sentence stress) on the predicate in which we are claiming something new about the subject; however, in the case of complex predicate (like "having a reason to φ"), we need still deeper analysis. When you ascribe "having a reason to φ" to A, given A and given a

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[1]. Schroeder believes that factoring account covers just subjective extensions of "having a reason.". He proposes a distinction between subjective and objective reason to show that, commonsensically, this relation includes both ignorant and false belief cases in Williams' theory.

reason for an action, you claim that there is a relationship of *having a reason* between A

and that reason to φ. Then, the most emphasis (naturally, or sometimes with a sentence

stress), is upon the *having a reason* relation[2] So, the most natural reading of 1 (i.e., H)

would be 1', with emphasis (naturally, or sometimes with a sentence stress) on Hxy.

However, there could be some other readings (necessarily with some sentence stress on

some special parts of a sentence), with different contents which are less natural, such as:

    1.1 **A** (not B) has a reason to φ. (stress on the subject)

    1.2 A has **a** (not two) reason to φ. (stress on 'a')

    1.3 A has a **reason** (not an inclination) to φ. (stress on the notion of reason)

    1.4 A **has** (not thinks that she has) a reason to φ. (stress on the relation of

having), etc.

However, none of these new internal reason-statements, conceptually or

semantically, "admits" external interpretation as well. Even though all of them presuppose

the existence of an agent-independent reason, they cannot be understood by reason

externalism because they include an extra constituent of "Having a reason" relation which

external interpretation lacks.

    In sentence 2 (i.e., S), the grammatical subject phrase is "reason for A to φ" and,

when we are asserting it, we claim the existence of such a reason. So, the emphasis of the

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[2]. This relation is not equivalent to "having" relation; the latter is more general than the
former, and I come back to it in section 4.

sentence (naturally, or with a sentence stress) is on the predicate phrase ("there is" or "exists" in 2*); the most natural translation of 2 is 2', with an emphasis (naturally, or with a sentence stress) on Fyx. However, we can have some other readings (necessarily with some sentence stress on some other words of the sentence) with different contents which are less natural, such as:

2.1 There is **a** (not two) reason for A to φ.

2.2 There is a **reason** (not an inclination) for A to φ.

2.3 There is a reason for **A** (not for B) to φ, etc.

The existence of a reason for A to φ, which is the main content of external reason-statements, is presupposed by internal interpretation. So, 2 (and its different readings) are compatible with internal interpretation, and it seems that, in this sense, 2 (in its all versions) can "admit" both interpretations. However, presupposing something by something doesn't follow that they are logically equivalent. Internal interpretation cannot be proposed as the truth conditions of this sentence; certainly, 2 (and all its different readings) can be true in the absence of "having a reason" relation (Hxy) which is an indispensable part of the internal interpretation. Therefore, none of these new stressed readings can provide us with a reason-statement (whether internal or external) of which both kinds of interpretations are true, or one reason-statement which admits, in any sense, both of them.

Moreover, even if we find, a stressed version of 1 or 2 of which both interpretations are true, it still doesn't conclude the possibility of one sentence "admitting" two interpretations. Every stressed version of 2 is a distinct sentence, and has different content, even though, for some limitations in our formal language, we formulate them all in the same syntax. Therefore, each version of 1 or 2 has different content and consequently needs different truth conditions. They are irreducible, and it is plausible to have two commonsensical interpretations for one sentence. Such a presupposition is implausible, and clearly, Williams' reason internalism, like any other internal theory, which is dependent on such a presupposition, would be implausible as well.

4.2.3 Transcendental argument vs. linguistic analysis

Without any reasonable account of the possibility of a sentence being such that there are two interpretations for it, Williams starts his metaethical and speculative argument to convince us that internal interpretation is the *only* truth condition of both reason-statements of H and S in this linguistic discussion. He simply ignores the fact that the external reason-statements (i.e. Ss), as we explored, by no means, *admit* such an internal interpretation. He wrongly presupposes that S's truth condition is reducible to H's, and he begins his transcendental argument to prove that both H and S admits *only* the internal interpretation - arguing transcendentally for a commonsensically implausible idea, which is the main problem of reason internalism.

The best reason for the possibility of something is showing one of its actual occurrences. It might be the case that Williams wants to prove the possibility of reason internalism through showing an occurrence of such interpretation for S in common language. If so, he could do it only by giving some commonsensical examples, not by proposing transcendental arguments. So, it is not surprising that his argument, as we shall see in the next section, ends up in question-begging.

4.3 Williams' argument revisited

Williams' reason internalism contains two explanatory and normative dimensions. He explicitly mentioned the explanatory dimension in IER, and the normativity of his theory is implied in the gin and tonic story in which he denies to call any consideration, which is based on false belief, as a reason for an action. He also admits that ignorant agents (who would be motivated to φ if they knew some facts) have a reason to φ. However, MacDowell's objection (1995), which Williams accepts it in *Reply to McDowell* (1995), is that William's interpretation is more psychological and too subjective; and it might be that the best interpretation of his theory is Davidsonian (Finlay, 2009).

In the first page of IER, Williams says that "has a reason" is equal to "has some motives." Given the rational deliberation process (without any specified definition), proceeded by the motivational set (which he extends to include all desire-like mental states developed specially by imagination), he proposes the following argument to falsify any external interpretation of reason-statements (i.e. both Hs and Ss).

Williams, in IER, says:

"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. Now no external reason statement could by itself explain anyone's action. Even if it were true (whatever that might turn out to mean) that there was a reason for Owen to join the army, that fact by itself would never explain anything that Owen did, not even his joining the army. For if it was true at all, it was true when Owen was not motivated to join the army. The whole point of external reason statements is that they can be true independently of the agent's motivations. But nothing can explain an agent's (intentional) actions except something that motivates him so to act. So, something else is needed besides the truth of the external reason statement to explain an action, some psychological link; and that psychological link would seem to be believed. A's believing an external reason statement about himself may help to explain his action." (Williams, 1979, 107)

There are several interpretations of this argument, and as Cohon (1986) and Finlay (2009) clarified, it is, in its standard interpretation, either inconclusive or question begin. My objection, in some aspects, is different, and in what follows I will show it's being question-begging based on a reading which I think is the most textual one.

Williams begins his argument proposing that a reason could provide, on particular occasion, an explanation (and not just a part of an explanation) of someone's reason for an action, and then, he argues, using *Modus Tollens*, that since, putative external reason,

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by definition, lacks the possibility of being such an explanation of an action, it is not reason at all. However, Williams doesn't provide us, like in some of the other claims in IER, with any argument for his new condition for a "reason" as being a *full*[3] explanation of someone's reason for an action. He just says "it would then figure in an explanation of that action". As I clarified, we have two distinct and irreducible reason-statements as well as two distinct relations of Fyx and Hxy. Williams' condition that a normative reason should be capable of being a *full* explanation of an action is just compatible with Hxy relation, which is so close to motivating reasoning, but it is irrelevant to Fyx relation, which by no means can be understood like motivating reasoning, and so, it (i.e., Fyx relation) cannot be, by itself, a *full* explanation of an action. As I explored, in section 4.2.1, Fyx is more general than Hxy (whenever you say he has a reason, you presupposed that there is a reason, but not vice versa), and so, Fyx can be some *part* of an explanation for an action, and it would be enough for external reason-statements to be true. Thus, given that smoking causes cancer, it is generally accepted that "there is a good reason for my friend and me to stop smoking;" however, she ignores it. In this case, the importance of a healthy life and the presupposition that smoking causes cancer provides a good reason for her and me to stop smoking. This external reason is part of the explanation of my stopping the smoking. However, it cannot fully explain my action of avoiding smoking unless I, the agent, believe in a healthy life and the fact that smoking causes cancer. So, the normative reason, here, could be part of an explanation, which will form a full explanation with the

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[3]. The soundness of his argument is completely based on the presupposition of a *full* explanation (and not just a part of an explanation); otherwise, the Modus Tollens doesn't work (for external reason has this property as well), and the argument would be inconclusive.

agent's beliefs. Williams starts his arguments by taking an *ad hoc* condition, which is compatible just with his favorite kind of reason, i.e. internal reason (in Hs), as a truth condition for all kind of reasons (including external reasons in Ss), and it is clearly question-begging.

In the first question, i.e., what are truth conditions of these two reason-statements of H and S?, we explore different notions of "reason", however, the more important question here, the second question, is that of which kind of reason is taken as a criterion for rationality and moral judgment? Up until now, I explored why I think reason internalism is impossible, and why H and S are not reducible, and each of them needs a distinct truth condition. In the next chapter 5, I come back to the first question, and I admit that the truth condition of S is external interpretation; however, the truth condition of H, as we will see, is not Williams' internal interpretation, which depends on his stipulative internal reason.

CHAPTER V : REASON CONTEXTUALISM

Coming back to the first question, and through a conceptual analysis of "having a reason," I hope to respond to the first question about the truth conditions of the two irreducible reason-statements of H and S. (The distinction between "having a reason" and "there is a reason for" has been considered in some articles (see, Cohon 1986, Zangwill 2003, Goldman 2005, M. Schroeder 2008), However, my conceptual analysis of "having a reason" is different from them in some aspects. Williams' so-called internal interpretation of "A has a reason to φ" is semantically false, and there is no such thing as an "internal reason" except as a merely stipulated thing. I argue that an agent has a reason *iff* she is *aware* of that reason and she understands it (not as Williams claims, necessarily *motivated* by), or it is contextually *possible* for her to be aware of and to understand it (and not even actual awareness) through internal deliberation or external exploration. I call this interpretation a *contextual* one which is dependent upon a contextual reason. The contextual reason is the genuine rival of the external reason, and so, it turns out that a commonsensical and valid debate should be called *contextual reason* vs. *external reason*. Needless to say, even though internal interpretation is false, and reason internalism, as it is shown in section 4.2, is semantically impossible, we can admit internal reason as a stipulation defined by Williams.

In section 5.2, I will come back to the second question, hoping to show which kind of reason would be legitimate to be granted in our rational or moral judgment. To answer this question, first, we need to distinguish between the *relative* (also referred to as instrumental or calculative) notion of reason and the *absolute* notion of reason, and

correspondingly, the distinction of *relative rationality* vs. *absolute rationality*. The contextual interpretation provides us with the best grounds here, and the *contextual reason* is the most intuitive answer to this question. In section 5.3, I will also show how rationality and moral judgments based on contextual reason (i.e. *contextual* rationality and moral judgment) will help us in the central problem in the debate, by showing how it accommodates counterexamples which both camps have dealt with for a long time.

5.1 Contextual reason and contextual Interpretation: The first question answered.

It is generally accepted that internal and external debate is about normative reason or reason for action (as opposed to theoretical, motivating, and explanatory reason), and it is also accepted that H and S are two reason-statements to express normative reasons, and I showed that why reason internalism – and any attempt to give one internalist interpretation for both H and S - fails. But, here I need to explicate what it means to say someone "has a reason" to do something. The distinction between "having a reason" and "there is a reason for" has been considered to some extent (see, Smith 1994, Zangwill 2003, Cohon 1986, M. Schroeder 2008, Goldman 2005); however, my conceptual analysis of "having a reason" is different from them in many aspects.

As we explored, external interpretation is the only true interpretation for S, and S is more general than H – whenever you say that "A has a reason to φ " you presupposed that "there is a reason for A to φ," but not vice versa. But what is intended by "having a reason" in H? Williams, in IER, takes "having a reason" simply equal to "having a motivation," without any arguments for this claim. He believes that the psychological

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connection between a consideration and an agent - which is required for the explanatory dimension of a normative reason - is "belief." According to Williams, "that psychological link would seem to be belief. A's believing an external reason-statement about himself may help to explain his action." However, this is just an *ad hoc* claim and new stipulation of normative reason which can not cover most commonsensical extensions. The psychological link of "belief" is too narrow, and it excludes a variety of reason-statements in the forms of both H and S. As it is explored, in section 4.2.1, external reason-statements, i.e. Ss, don't need any psychological link to be true. Moreover, Internal reason-statements, i.e. Hs, need a kind of psychological link to be true, however, "belief" doesn't includes all intuitive examples. To have a commonsensical definition which includes almost all the reason-statements, I believe, based on explication of some major examples and counterexamples, that the necessary psychological relation in "A has a reason to φ," which is required for the explanatory dimension of a reason for action, is the more liberal relation of "contextual understanding," whether or not it is actual right now. So, "having a reason" refers to a more general meaning and it equals to "being contextually possible for an agent to understanding it" no matter whether you are motivated by that reason or not. "Having a reason" doesn't refer just to an actual awareness and understanding, but it also includes the case that it is *contextually plausible* for the agent to be aware of a reason and make a sense out of it.

Consider that Rayan is accepted as a Ph.D. student in the philosophy program at the University of Michigan. His adviser, in an orientation session, says that: today, I want to talk about some important things which are also accessible online; and, as I mentioned

in my previous emails, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. However, Rayan missed the orientation session, and he missed his adviser' remarks as well. Moreover, it is a fact about Rayan that he is not comfortable with some of these remarks, and he fails to follow some of them (such as doing registration in 3 and 3' on time), and he would be penalized – say with some late fee.

From the adviser's point of view, as a grad student,

1- Rayan has a reason to study philosophy.

2- There are some reasons for Rayan to follow some moral and professional rules.

3- Rayan, like other Ph.D. students, has some reason to register for three courses (9 credit hours) in the fall, and this is due on September 9.

That is not all the story. After the first semester, for some reasons, he transfers to Durham University in England and starts a *research*-based Ph.D. program there. He had the same story there about the orientation session – his adviser talks about some remarks, and he missed it, and so on and so forth.

From the new adviser's viewpoint (at Durham University), as a grad student,

1'-Rayan has a reason to study philosophy.

2'-There are some reasons for Rayan to follow some moral and professional rules.

3'-Rayan has a reason to register for 12 *research* credit hours, and it is due on January 30.

If you think that the only true sentences are 1, 1', you believe in internal reason and reason internalism (which denies any external reason), if you think that the only true sentences are 1, 1' and 2, 2', then you believe in both external reason and internal reason (but not reason internalism). If you think that all reason-statements are true, then, in addition to the previous kinds of reasons, you believe in another one which is relevant to the *context* – i.e., contextual reason. And this kind of reason includes not just the actual cases of the agent's awareness of the rules, but the *contextually accessible* cases as well.

Rayan, is not aware of 3,3' however, he is in a context that it is expected from him to be aware of 3, 3' and we believe that 3 and 3' are true of him. Moreover, even though for the sake of *different* contexts, the content of 3 and 3' are not the same, but we say that he has both reasons (of taking nine-course credits at Michigan, and 12 research credits ad Durham) based on different contexts. Rayan is not actually aware of the remarks, and so he is not motivated to take the credits before the deadlines; however, he has some reasons to register for them. So, "having a reason" is not limited just to the cases which the agent is both *understand* and *motivated* by the considerations; in 3,3' he is not motivated to do that even if he knew; It is not also limited just to the case that the agent actually understands of the consideration – the accessible understanding relevant to the context is enough. So, "having a motivation," as proposed by Williams, is neither a sufficient nor necessary truth condition of Hs, i.e. "A has a reason for φ." "Having a motivation" is just

one special usage of the of "having a reason." Williams, in an *ad hoc* manner, stipulates internal reason for just a usage of "having a reason." The only truth condition of H is the contextual interpretation in terms of *contextual understanding* of a consideration. However, it doesn't mean that we have no internal reason. The internal reason is simply a stipulation, and it includes just one usage of "having a reason" relation. Therefore, it turns out that the debate of *internal and external reason,* which started by Williams, is not intuitional and genuine one, and we need to replace it by the commonsensical debate of *contextual reason vs. external reasons*. Therefore, regarding the accessibility of reason for an agent, we have two notions of reason, contextual and external; and there might be an internal reason just in a stipulative sense proposed by Williams.

5.2 Contextualist rationality: The second question answered.

The notion of rationality and our criterion for moral judgment plays a central role in response to the central problem in the debate. We need an appropriate response to the second question - which kind of reason is granted in the notion of rational and moral judgment? Or which of them would justify a rational and moral agent to φ?

To answer these questions, we need still another division on the notion of reason. Let's start with two preliminary points.

First, as Juan Comesaña shows (2014), "having a reason" is not factive. When you say that someone has a reason to φ, it doesn't follow that he has necessarily a true or valid reason to φ. We can legitimately talk about "false or true reasons"; we would legitimately

ascribe a false reason to someone and say "he has a false reason for suicide;" and it clearly shows that "having a reason" doesn't follow that the reason is necessarily true or valid.

Secondly, we should note that even though H and S are two typical reason-statements, by them *normative reasons* usually could be asserted, but their usages are not limited just to the normative reason- statement. Sometimes we use them to express some reason for some beliefs (i.e. *theoretical reason* as opposed to practical reason) or to show some motivations for an action (*motivating reason*), or some explanations for an action (*explanatory reason*); the last two ones are two kinds of practical reason. These four kinds of "reasons", respectively, are based on the relation between a reason and its objects (theories or actions), and the relation between a reason and an action regarding the motivational or explanatory dimensions.

Figure 1: Kinds of Reasons
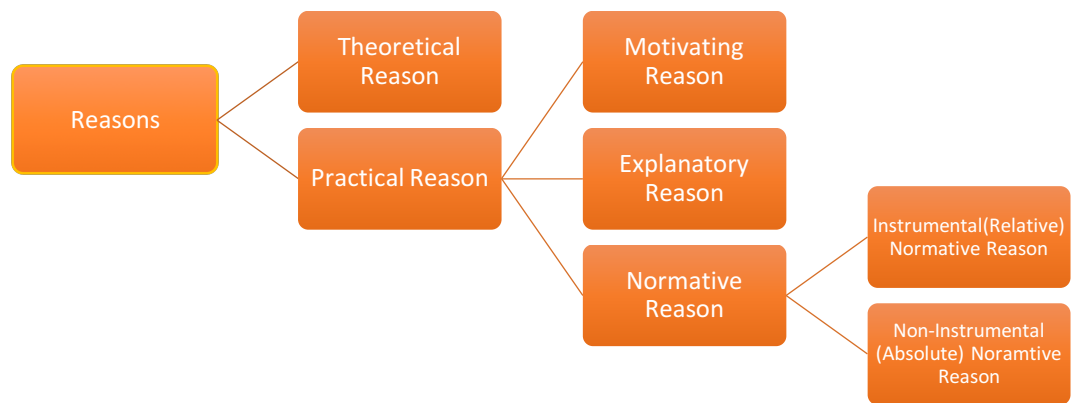
That being said, we can propose another division of the *normative reason* regarding the relationship between a reason and origins or goals of the reason (i.e.

instrumental normative reasons vs. non-instrumental/absolute normative reason). Then, we have four kinds of practical reasons applied in the following propositions.

1- Hitler had a reason to kill Ernst (Rohm) because he betrayed him (motivating reason).

2- Hitler had a reason to kill Ernst because he understood that Ernst betrayed him (explanatory reason).

3- Hitler had a reason to kill Ernst because he wanted revenge (instrumental normative reason).

There is no reason for Hitler to kill Ernst because he could sue him for his betrayal, and give him an opportunity to defend. This kind of "reason" is factive (non-instrumental normative reason).

These are some prevailing usages of practical "reason." Each of them may refer to a different notion of "reason," and consequently, each of them has a separate truth condition. It is generally accepted that each of 1 and 2 has distinct interpretations; however, Humeans, explicitly or implicitly, in a reductionist manner, want to unify 3 and 4 (i.e. normative reasons); and they claim that instrumental reason is the only kind of practical reasoning. I believe that 3 and 4, like 1 and 2, each has a distinct truth condition. Instrumental reason, in 3, is a relational concept, and we can't imagine it independent of its certain goal, i.e. the revenge; and it is a *relative reason*. The notion of reason in 4, in contra, can be understood without the presence of any kinds of goal, so it is called *absolute reason*. Therefore, regarding the first division of "reason" explored in section 5.1 (i.e.

contextual, external and internal reason, which is stipulated by Williams), and the second one explained here, i.e. relative and absolute reasons, we have six kinds of normative practical reasons – relative internal, external and contextual reasons, and absolute internal, external and contextual reasons (See figure 2 and 3).

Figure 2: Kinds of Normative Practical Reasons

	External Reason	**Contextual Reason**	**Internal Reason**	**Humean** desire-based reason
Instrumental (relative) Reason	Relative External Reason	Relative Contextual Reason	Relative internal reason	Humean instrumental reason
Non-Instrumental (absolute) Reason	Absolute External Reason	Absolute Contextual Reason	Absolute internal reason	

Figure 3: Kinds of Rationalities (The same collars means necessary relations between a certain reason and the relevant kind of rationality)

	Hume	Williams	Schroder	Contextualist	Externalists
Instrumental Rationality	Humean instrumental reason	Relative internal reason	Relative internal reason+ Humean instrumental reason	Relative Contextual Reason	Humean instrumental reason
Absolute Rationality	He doesn't believe in such a kind of reason	He doesn't believe in such a kind of reason	He doesn't believe in such a kind of reason	Absolute Contextual Reason	Absolute External Reason

Furthermore, there are two commonsensical senses of rationality, i.e., instrumental or relative rationality and absolute rationality. When we say that it is rational for an army to attack at night after sunrise, no matter if it is Hitler's army or Russia's army, we are using "rationality" in its *relative* sense. In contrast, when we say that Hitler's attack on Russia and killing thousands of innocent people is an irrational and immoral action, we are using the term in an *absolute* sense.

Therefore, we have two notions of normative rationality which requires two different definitions and truth conditions, and we can't simply, in a Humean way, unify them and try to define them just by one concept.

Now, we can ask, more accurately, which kind of relative reasons - i.e., relative contextual, external, or may be internal reason- is granted in the notion of relative or instrumental rationality? And which kind of absolute reasons – i.e. absolute contextual, external or maybe internal reason – is granted in the notion of absolute rationality as well as moral judgments?

5.2.1 Conceptual analysis of rationality: absolute rationality vs. relative rationality

Theoretical rationality aims at *true* beliefs; however, it rarely can grasp it. So, it would be plausible to define rationality in beliefs by the property of being consistent and truth-conducive. Similarly, it seems that practical rationality aims at the *right* actions, but it doesn't follow that the action would always be the right and the best one. However, regarding the aforementioned distinctions, we cannot simply unify all notions of

rationalities using just one conception - as some people proposed accounting rationality as *coherence* (Goldman, 2005).

Let's start with the *absolute* notion of rationality, corresponding to the absolute reason in sentence 4. The notion of reason in sentence 4, is not instrumental, and it says that Hitler had no reason to kill Ernst. It clearly shows that we encounter an *absolute* reason, which is independent of the agent's actual desires and goals. And it is generally accepted that Hitler, in this *absolut*e sense, is not rational. This notion of rationality is intuitively dependent upon morality, and it is one of the most practical usages of rationality. Now, which kind of absolute reason – i.e. absolute contextual, external or maybe internal reason - is the commonsensical constituent of the absolute notion of rationality?

Asha and Rayan recently became friends on Facebook. Asha is living with his tribe in a forest near the equator, and Bernie recently got an iPhone for her. Bernie is a cultural activist who works with some charities in different countries. The presidential election of the USA is going to be held in two weeks, and Brayan, like some other people, is fully engaged in election campaigns (and maybe due to that he didn't show up in orientation session in the University of Michigan!). He talks with Asha about the election and the voting process in the USA, and he explains it to her, and he states that it is a usual political structure for choosing a president. Asha listens carefully to Rayan to get the idea which is called democracy; however, she is not sympathetic to Rayan, and she thinks that it cannot be the best way to choose a leader. She believes that her vote cannot be equal to her brother's, father's or the vote of the head of the tribe. Rayan implicitly accuses her of being

irrational, while he himself is going to vote for a racist and sexist person in the upcoming election!

If you think, like Rayan, that Asha is an irrational person, you are an externalist. If you think that Rayan himself, while he votes for racism and sexism, is a rational person, you are an internalist. If not, you are sympathetic with Bernie who believes in contextual rationality.

Bernie has been working in different cultures for a long time, and he is thoroughly familiar with cultural diversity and its origins and implications in the modern world. From Bernie's point of view, it is immoral to accuse Asha of being irrational, while it is fully reasonable to condemn Rayan for his immoral and irrational approaches. Bernie believes that Rayan chooses to be a racist while he is living in a context in which it is not difficult to learn about the reasons for human rights and against racism; Rayan knows them; however, he ignores them. Bernie believes that it would be morally wrong to recognize Rayan as a rational and moral person, even though he is instrumentally rational.

5.3 Contextual rationality and the central problem

As it is shown in chapter 3, the central problem in the debate is some moral considerations for both reason internalism and externalism. Williams' theory of rationality and moral judgments is correlated with his internal reason, and according to his reason internalism, Rayan has no reason to change his mind about racism as long as he doesn't come to motivated by some of the reasons against it. Similarly, Hitler had no reason to stop killing people as long as he had not been motivated by some universal moral codes.

Likewise, a person who treats his wife very badly has not any reason to change his treatments as long as he is not motivated by some reasons about human rights. Externalists, in contra, believe that moral judgment and rationality should be established based on external reason, no matter whether or not the agent is motivated by or could make any sense of these rules. So, they, like Rayan, easily accuse Asha of being immoral and irrational, ignoring the context in which she is.

Reason contextualism, based on contextual reason, would be the best way to define absolute rationality such that it includes all the intuitive extensions of rationality and moral judgment (like that about some people who are not properly brought up) and excludes all the irrational and immoral ones (like Hitler.) Given that the "reason" in a sentence is absolute reason, like sentence 4, according to the contextual interpretation "A has a reason to φ", is true if the agent is aware of a reason and understands it *or* it is *contextually accessible* for the agent to be aware of a reason and make a sense out of it, no matter if she/he is motivated by that reason or not. Therefore, according to the contextual interpretation, Rayan has some strong reasons to stop supporting the racist candidate. Hitler has a lot of reasons to stop killing innocent people, and he is definitely an immoral and irrational agent. The agent who treats his wife immorally is definitely an immoral person if she has been brought up in a context in which the action is generally considered as a morally bad one. Moreover, it is immoral to accuse Asha, who is not sympathetic with liberal democracy, of being irrational. The argument for liberal democracy is not simply available for her as much as Rayan.

Needless to say, we are talking about judging an agent's action, not the action independently itself. Certainly, our judgments about actions would be entirely independent of the agent's mental states or the context. We can have an immoral person who is doing a moral action (in the case that Hitler is mistakenly condemning his Nazi fellow), or we can have a moral person who is doing an immoral action (in a case that a fair judge is condemning, based on some false evidence, an innocent person).

The last but not the least point about absolute rationality and moral judgment, is that sometimes some agent is in a context that their moral intuitions get very weak, and they cannot understand some obvious moral or rational rules anymore; however, they could, already, do some jobs to prevent ending up in such bad epistemic and psychologic situations. In these cases, since these agents are responsible for this bad situation, they would be evaluated and judged on the basis of the standard cases, and they are ultimately responsible for their actions. For example, I am going to drive while I drank a lot! Am I justified in my bad driving just for my being unaware or unconscious? Nope! A drunk driver who, consciously and deliberately, made himself drunk, is not free of the consequences of his drunk driving.

But, what about the instrumental or relative notion of rationality in different fields of empirical science, economics, and decision theory? Does it also demand contextual reason? Instrumental rationality in sentence 3 is independent of any moral aspect, and it evaluates Hitler's action in comparison to his goal and desires. Likewise, when we say that it is rational for Hitler to attack at night if he wants to win the battle, we are using the term in its relative or calculative sense, no matter what moral or immoral consequences it does

have. Still in another example, when some nuclear engineers propose a method to increase the power of nuclear bombs, and when he claims that "if you want to have most powerful bombs it would be rational to work on this project", he is asserting the term of "rationality" in its instrumental sense which is completely independent of any other considerations (including moral ones) except achieving a certain goal.

Instrumental rationality matters in many scientific fields. When Hume said that "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions" he intended the instrumental notion of rationality, and his faithful follower, Williams, wanted to reduce all notions of rationality simply to this instrumental and relative rationality and all notions of reason to his stipulative internal reason. As it is explored, such reductions would be *ad hoc* and end up in question-begging claims. I believe that relative rationality, like absolute rationality, should be defined on the basis of contextual reason if it wants to avoid counter examples as well. I will explore the contextualist decision theory in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI : CONTEXTUALISM IN DECISION THEORY

6.1 Contextualism vs. Invariantism

Decision theorists propose a normative theory of rational choice. Traditionally, they assume that they should provide some *constant* and *invariant* principles as criteria for rational decisions, and indirectly, for agents. They seek a decision theory that invariably works for all agents all the time. They believe that a rational agent should follow a certain principle, perhaps the principle of maximizing expected utility everywhere, all the time. As a result of the given context, these principles are considered, in this sense, *context-independent*.

Furthermore, decision theorists usually assume that the relevant agents at work are ideal agents, and they believe that non-ideal agents should follow them so that their decisions qualify as rational. These principles are *universal* rules. I will refer to this *context-independent* and *universal* approach in traditional decision theory as **Invariantism**. This approach is, implicitly or explicitly, adopted by theories which are proposed on the basis of these two assumptions.

On the contrary, consider an alternative approach which doesn't assume that a decision theory is *context-independent* or *universal*. According to this new approach, which I call **contextualist decision theory,** the notion of rationality is relevant to context; and applies differently in variant contexts with distinct agents.

The important point is that, contextualist decision theory is not, directly, a theory about rational decision, neither is a rival theory for other decision theories; it can be best

understood as a pragmatic metalinguistic theory about the usages of certain propositions involving terms such as "rationality", "rational decisions", "rational agents", etc. Put it in other words, contextualist decision theory doesn't propose any new theory regarding the nature or definition of "rationality" in decision theory. Instead, it assumes a notion of rationality or a theory of decision making; and then talks about the realization or truth conditions of that notion in different contexts.

Consider a smart agent who believes in the standard principle of *maximizing expected utility*, and thus, follows the standard formula of expected utility to make rational decisions in her life. However, her commitment to this formula and the accuracy of her calculation of the expected utility depends on pragmatic sensitivity in the context. Her being in a high or low-stake situations plays a central role in our evaluation, and in the legitimacy of ascribing rationality to her decision, and indirectly, to herself.

In the following section, I explain why *invariantism* is not a correct ground for decision theory; I shall propose some counterexamples to invariantism, and will show how we can explain them just in terms of the contextualist approach.

6.2 Some counterexamples to invariantism

I believe that there are several counterexamples to invariantism, and I think they can be best explained just in terms of contextualism.

6.2.1 Counterexample (1):

Consider these two lotteries;

1- Lottery A involves exactly two tickets. If ticket 1 is drawn you win 20 units of value, otherwise you lose 10. So, the expected utility of participating in this lottery would be:

EU: ½ . 20 + ½ . (-10)= 10 – 5= 5

2- Lottery B also involves just two tickets. If you get ticket 1, then you will win 20,000,000 units of value, otherwise, you lose 10,000,000. So, the expected utility of participating in this lottery would be:

EU= ½ . 20,000,000 +1/2 . -10,000,000=5,000,000

According to the EU principle, it would be rational to prefer B to A; however, we intuitively believe that A is the only rational decision in this case. So, it is not always rational to follow the principle of maximizing expected utility principle. Sometimes we need to act against it. Therefore, it is completely relative to context.

It might be said that "utility" does not just consist in monetary values. The utility of an act would be the sum of all numbers assigned to the positive and negative values of the outcomes, in addition to the positive and negative monetary value. So, in lottery 2, we should consider the risk or regret which specifies some negative value as part of the utility of our action; and we should assign a relevant number, say for example (-30,000,000), to the risk as a negative value, and add it to (-10,000,000: negative monetary value if we lose), therefore, the EU of the second lottery would be much lower than the first one.

If we accept this interpretation of "utility", then this case would not constitute a counterexample to invariantism.

It seems that in order to provide a convincing counterexample, we need to introduce a case with a low expected utility, which is, nonetheless, rational relative to the context. In what follows, we will see that such an expectation is not realistic or required, and in fact, such a counterexample is impossible.

The contextualist decision theorist doesn't claim that there can be contexts in which the EU of A is high than that of B, while it is intuitively more rational to do B. It seems that maximization of the utility - in its general sense, not just a technical formula - is an inseparable constituent of the notion of rationality, and we can say that *maximization of expected utility* for the notion of "rationality", in its instrumental sense, is like *factivity* for the notion of "knowledge". In other words, it would be contradictory to say:

- Decision "A" is instrumentally rational but it does not maximize the expected utility.

Or

- Decision A is more rational than B, but, decision B has a higher expected utility than A.

It is strongly intuitive that what is instrumentally rational for any agent should get the agent closer to her goal, and should satisfy at least some parts of her desires which form the goal.

Hence, this is not a correct counterexample. But, what does the contextualist decision theorist want to say? And what would be the proper counterexample to invariantism?

According to the contextualist decision theory, any acceptable decision theory, and the relevant notion of rationality (whatsoever) is relative to context; and pragmatic sensitivity and epistemic sensitivity are two determining factors in different contexts. We can explain this as follows.

First, we redefine all notions of "rationality" in terms of the three following constitutes, and say it is,

1- A feature of an act and, indirectly, of an agent;

2- Maximizing expected utility - in a general sense, not based on a technical reason or formula like Savage's - is a substantial part of that,

3- There is a reason (mainly formal) according to which we claim this act maximizes our expected utility or has more expected utility than the other.

And secondly, we divide these reasons (which is mentioned in 3) as follows:

a- The best or more technical reasons which can explain an ideal agent's preferences such as von Neumann and Morgenstern or Savag's theory, considering all possible state (more objective rules).

b- Some ordinary and internal reasons by non-ideal agents (more subjective rules).

The contextualist, along with the traditional invariantist, believes that a rational decision should maximize the expected utilities, however, she says that "as the pragmatic stakes rise or the logical and epistemically precisions become more serious, the contextual standard gets more demanding." Like justification in epistemology which aims at

providing a true belief, reason in decision theory aims at recognizing the closest decision to the right decision with the most expected utilities. (Patrick, 2016)

So a relevant counterexample to invariantism is not a case in which a rational decision maker decides to follow an action with less expected utility. In fact, that would be actually contradictory. An accurate and convincing counterexample is a case in which an action is, according to a theory, say ordinary EUP, rational in one context and irrational in another context. Also, an action is, according to the simple calculation of EU (without considering all possible states), rational in one case and irrational in other cases. For more clarification, consider the following counterexamples.

6.2.2 Counterexample (2)

Consider the non-ideal agent A: (by a non-ideal agent I mean an agent who cannot represent her preferences without any contradiction such that can be explained by one of the above theories in **a**)

1- Consider person A who holds a lottery ticket with just two options (probability is ½). The two possible outcomes for A are + $10 and - $11). She participates in the lottery and her reason for this is just her subjective kinds of reason, and since stakes are low, it is not an irrational decision for A.

2- Consider person A who wants to choose the best option for her daughter's heart transplant surgery. She doesn't rely on her subjective reason (or a simple and naive decision theory) to decide in this high stake situation. She rightly believes that

making a decision, in this high-stake situation, without consulting with ideal agents would be irrational. In other words, due to the pragmatic sensitivity in this case, the rationality standards get more demanding and the only rational decision for that agent is consulting with some ideal agents and following them.

The important difference between this example and the first is that the agents in the first example are ideal agents who fully understand the principle of maximizing expected utility and can correctly exhibit their preferences. In the second example, the agents are non-ideal, however, that doesn't necessarily mean that they would be irrational in all of their decisions. It completely depends on different contexts.

6.2.3 Counterexample (3):

Another still more commonsensical example is as follows.

- Consider A who is a local shopkeeper in College Station, and she wants to expand her business marketing. She decides to consult with a marketing counselor to get some advice. Making a commercial decision on the basis of advice by just one marketing counselor would be rational for a local shopping in College Station. However, such an approach would be irrational for owners of Google Incorporation who wants to develop their business. If they want to make some rational decisions for their business, they need to establish a more professional committee including some of the best decision theorists, economists and marketing counselors.

6.3 Contextualist decision theory and its explanatory power

I explained how we can think of contextualism, as opposed to invariantism, as an alternative approach in decision theory. I also mentioned contextualism is not a rival for other decision theories. However, it might be said how it is possible to have an alternative approach which is not a rival for other decision theories. In fact, this problem traces back to different levels of explanation at work. On a more basic level, I take contextualism as opposed to invariantism (which is the common ground for all traditional decision theories). Hence, it is not a rival for decision theories. However, if we notice that contextualism puts some restrictions on all traditional decision theories, we can say that this new approach is contrary to all other theories, in their universal sense. It means that according to contextualism, we first reject the universality of other decision theories, and then we accept their applications just in some limited contexts. From this point of view, we can say that contextualism is a rival for all traditional decision theories, too.

Therefore, contextualism can explain much more commonsensical extensions of rational decisions in different contexts. The scope of application of each traditional theory is limited, although we can explain all commonsensical extensions in terms of contextualism, using any one of traditional theories in their appropriate contexts.

I believe that contextualism can also explain some non-intuitive implications of invariantism. Some non-intuitive implications of invariantism are as follows, and we can avoid these implications if we adopt the contextualist approach.

Some non-intuitive implications of invariantism are as follows:

- Every decision theory which assumes invariantism would be so excessively narrow (i.e. explains just a limited and special group of commonsensical extensions) such that if you accept it, for example, say von Neumann and Morgenstern's theory, you should exclude not just all the people who cannot represent their preferences in terms of some special axioms, but still all other decision theorists who don't follow your principles. All of them will be considered as irrational agents in all their decisions making.

- As Paul Weirich proposed in *Models of decision makings*, some or most of these decision theories and principles are technical and non-commonsensical.

- Since every decision theory would propose a relevant notion of rationality, we face different notions of rationality without determining the relation between them. However, it seems that semantically there is just one meaning for rationality (in different levels) in the ordinary language.

However, based on contextualism, we can say, without contradicting ourselves, that Von Neumann and Morgenstern are rational people and, *at the same time* other decision theorists are also rational in their decision making. Moreover, we can also *legitimately* believe in both commonsensical and more technical decision theories and different levels of rationality. Furthermore, we can have different notions of rationalities in different contexts without any contradiction.

The main component of rationality is the commonsensical sense of maximizing the expected utility, not the technical formula, which is formulated in different decision theories and this is the common and shared section in all of these theories. Each of these theories explains just some extensions and according to the contextualist approach, which is a pragmatic one and is not a rival for other theories, we can explain all commonsensical extensions of different usages of the terms related to rationality - such as rational agent, rational action, rational idea, etc.

The last but not the least point is related to an important question. Why does an agent, for example, say an ideal agent, in different contexts, and based on pragmatic or epistemic sensitivity, invoke a certain decision theory? Is it arbitrary or not? It seems to me that even selecting an appropriate theory in a certain decision situation, in different contexts, could be explained in terms of contextualism and the commonsensical notion of maximizing expected utility.

Recall the shopkeeper in example 3 who is going to pay money to for meeting with just one marketing adviser to improve her business. It is rational for her to rely on the adviser. However, it is not rational for a big company to accept her business. A big company needs to hire more professional marketing experts to find some more advanced decision theory and more exact analysis considering almost all possible conditions. How can we explain the difference at work? It seems that both agents - the local shopkeeper and the Google Incorporation - first, calculate the simple maximizing expected utility to determine which strategy (consulting with just one adviser or hiring more professional counselors) would be the best one regarding their contexts. For a local shopkeeper, it will

be too costly and time-consuming to follow more exact decision theories with more exact analyses. Therefore, it is not rational for her to do this. However, regarding the considerable incomes of Google Incorporation, it would be fully rational to pay a lot of money to find the best decision theory and make the best decisions for their business.

6.4 High standard and low standard decision making

I believe that the distinction between *ideal* and *non-ideal* agents is not realistic or precise. From a contextualist perspective, it is not the case that *ideal* agent would always follow the utility principles in all decision situations she faces. She does not always encounter high-stake decision situations which require high standards. Many of decision situations in everyday life are such that a decision making based on low standards and less precise principles would be enough to be rational in these cases. Consider an ideal agent and a decision theorist like Savage who should choose between two complicated decision theories and decide to follow the best one; and compare it with his approach when he should choose between two kinds of oranges to decide which one is the best to buy. As opposed to the first situation, in the second, he simply prefers to follow just the simple and more subjective maximization of expected utility principle without considering all the possible states and probabilities, which this is certainly a rational decision.

On the contrary, it is not the case that a non-ideal agent would always act irrationally based on her non-ideal decision principles. Sometimes she would face low-stake situations and it is enough for her to count as a rational agent *iff* she follows low-standards or

subjective principles with less accurate results. Likewise, in a very sensitive situation, which requires high standards, she can decide rationally, because she is not intelligent enough to choose correctly, she can *suspend* any decision in such a situation and this *suspension* would be a rational decision for her in these situations, regardless of what the principles say.

CHAPTER VII: 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 a close relationship between normative vs. motivating reasoning and objective vs. subjective reasoning and it may make the importance of normativity clearer.

I am sympathetic with McDowell that Williams's arguments are too psychologistic 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 common sense and intuition would be the least controversial answered here, and I think, from the commonsensical point of view, both of these two approaches are applicable 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 contextualist rationality can persuade Williams and satisfy his condition that says a theory of rationality should say something distinctive about a specified person. At the same time, it seems to me this approach is not too subjective and psychological which is objected by McDowell.

Williams translates "having a reason" to "having a motivation" which is interpreted based on the psychological link of "belief." He also in an *ad hoc* way excludes the reasons based on false beliefs, from his definition of reason (M Schroeder 2008). He goes beyond that, and takes desire-like mental states as the truth conditions of the most general reason-

statements like "there is a reason for A to φ," and it was just a bluff! He doesn't support his theory but with one question-begging argument. Schroeder tries to make reason internalism more commonsensical, by involving the case of false beliefs into the definition. He says that we have two kinds of internal reason (subjective and objective), however, this new version is still too psychological and can't resist the counterexamples for the reason internalism. It seems that he intends to increase the objectivity and normativity of his theory by excluding two cases of false belief and ignorant agent, however, this level of normativity is much lower to accommodate the counterexamples.

The problem of reason internalism started with two reductions, and Williams tries to solve a commonsensical and linguistic problem with some speculative argument ignoring the intuitive extensions. Indeed, reason internalism is a new and *ad hoc* theory in terms of the stipulation of internal reason. So, it is not surprising that such theory cannot be compatible with commonsensical intuitions, and ends up in question-begging. The internal reason is a stipulation by Williams, internal interpretation is false, and reason internalism is semantically implausible.

Reason externalist, in contra, is so anti-psychologist, as Williams clarifies (1995), and we cannot reasonably evaluate ordinary agents on the basis of that. Externalists believe to the highest level of objectivity as well as normativity, no matter whether they can provide some grounds for such a level of objectivity or not. Do we have such an objective source for morality?! If so, to what extent is it accessible for the agents?! Such an extreme theory, as we explored, cannot resist some counterexamples as well. Likewise,

reason externalists didn't even take the *awareness* of the agents into their account, and it clearly violates the principle of *ought implies can*.

Finally, there are two contextual definitions of rationality corresponding to the two notions of relative and absolute contextual reasons. The contextual approach is based on a middle level of objectivity which is contextually accessible for the agent and is the best way to avoid the counterexamples in both camps. It provides us with the best intuitive grounds to give an intuitive explication of both relative and absolute notion of rationality, as well as fair moral judgment and prudential reasoning.

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