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Hume Studies Volume XV Number 1 (April 1989) 163-183.

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HUME'S THEORY OF MOTIVATION

In this paper I shall defend a Humean¹ theory of motivation. But first I should like to examine some of the standard criticisms of this theory and some alternative views that are currently in favour.

Both in the Treatise and the Enquiry Hume maintains that reason alone never motivates action but always requires the cooperation of some separate, and separately identifiable desire-factor in order to bring about action. What are Hume's grounds for this view? In the Treatise, Hume writes:

'Tis obvious, that when we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carry'd to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction.... 'Tis from the prospect of pleasure or pain that the aversion or propensity, arises towards any object....²

This passage suggests that the way we (and Hume) know about the presence of the separate desire factor which he claims is always needed to motivate our every purposive action is by being directly aware of some desire-feeling, by introspection, each and every time we act. There is however a familiar objection to this argument: no doubt we sometimes are aware of a feeling of desire when we act, e.g., in cases where we are motivated by strong emotions. But much of the time when we act calmly or casually, after having deliberated 'in a cool hour', or when performing routine and trivial acts, we are not directly aware of any desire-feeling at the time of action.

Hume is not unaware of this objection -- in reply to it he invokes his notorious doctrine of the calm passions. He writes:

'Tis natural for one, that does not examine objects with a strict philosophic eye, to imagine, that those actions of the mind are entirely the same, which produce not a different sensation, and are not immediately distinguishable to the feeling and perception. Reason, for instance, exerts itself without producing any sensible emotion; and except in the more sublime disquisitions of philosophy, or in the frivolous subtilities of the schools, scarce ever conveys any pleasure or uneasiness. Hence it proceeds, that every action of the mind, which operates with the same calmness and tranquillity, is confounded with reason by all those, who judge of things from the first view and appearance. Now 'tis certain, there are certain calm desires and tendencies, which, tho' they be real passions, produce little emotion in the mind, and are more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation. These desires are of two kinds; either certain instincts originally implanted in our natures, such as benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children; or the general appetite to good, and aversion to evil, consider'd merely as such. When any of these passions are calm, and cause no disorder in the soul, they are very readily taken for the determination of reason, and are suppos'd to proceed from the same faculty, with that, which judges of truth and falshood. Their nature and principles have been suppos'd the same, because their sensations are not evidently different. (T 417)

The most obvious application of this argument would be to cases of cool, seemingly passionless

deliberation: e.g., in the course of planning the family budget I set aside funds for the children's education. A cursory inspection (or recollection) of the contents of my conscious mind at the time of acting would reveal to me some purely rational considerations that I had in mind at the time. I had some thoughts at the time whose contents are (roughly) expressible in such words as "If I don't put aside so much per month over so many years we will never be able to see them all through university." But cursory introspection or recollection would not detect any separately identifiable desire-factor present to my conscious mind at the time. Considered philosophical examination, Hume assures us, will reveal one, a 'calm' one -- in this case calm 'kindness to children'.

Less obviously, the calm-passions argument, most naturally applicable to cases of deliberation, can be extended also to cover cases of routine habit-action: e.g., when standing impatiently at a busy street corner, it is as a matter of habit that I wait for the lights to turn green before crossing. Arguably, my grasp of my situation as I stand there includes certain rational considerations, i.e., thoughts, more or less in the background³ of consciousness, thoughts whose contents are (roughly) expressible⁴ in such words as "It really would be dangerous to bolt across on the red just now." But again, causal introspection might well overlook the calm passion that must in Hume's view accompany such thoughts, in this case my calm 'love of life'.

'Notorious' is the word for Hume's calm-passions argument, for it is commonly regarded as a text-book case of an ad hoc supposition introduced to

save a false theory. A recent example of this sort of criticism is to be found in Barry Stroud's book, Hume.⁵ Stroud claims that the calm-passions argument is both unsound in itself and also inconsistent with one of Hume's most fundamental views about the mind -- the incorrigibility thesis -- the belief that we cannot be mistaken about the contents of our own minds at any given moment.

In support of his claim that Hume's argument is unsound, Stroud writes:

He says that the calm passions are "more known by their effects than by their immediate feeling or sensation", but what are the effects by which such passions are known to exist? The only candidates would seem to be the actions or inclinations which the calm passions actually cause. But if the calm passions are known to exist from the fact that certain actions or inclinations occur, and the fact that those passions are the causes of those actions or inclinations, then there must be some independent way to discover that calm passions are the causes of those actions and inclinations. If we knew that passions were always involved in the production of every action we could infer from the occurrence of an action that a passion existed, even if it was not "violent" enough to be felt. This is in effect what Hume does. But he still has given no such independent justification. The question of whether a separate passion is in fact involved in the causality of every action is precisely what is at issue. (pp. 164-165)

Regarding the charge of inconsistency Stroud writes:

Hume agrees that direct inspection or introspection does not always yield a passion as the cause of action. He thinks that although it often seems to

us as if there is no passion or emotion involved, nevertheless in such cases we are wrong. There is a passion there, although it is entirely natural that we should miss it.... We do not simply feel "calm passions"; their existence and efficacy is not discovered by direct inspection. But Hume says "'tis certain" that there are such passions and desires; they feel to us just like "determinations of reason" but he claims to know they are not. This does not cohere very well with his fundamental principle that we cannot be wrong about the contents of our own minds at a given moment.

Apparently we are often mistaken about whether or not a certain calm passion is before the mind. On the basis of the feeling or sensation alone we often think that only a "determination of reason" is leading us to act, but in fact, unknown to us, it is a calm passion. Hume is willing to forget one of the foundations of the theory of ideas in order to support his account of the role of reason in action, although as we shall see, his theory of action takes its shape primarily from the theory of ideas. (pp. 163-164)

Having criticized the 'calm-passions' argument on these two grounds Stroud then attacks the heart of Hume's theory of motivation -- Hume's belief in the indispensable desire-factor without which no motivated action is ever performed. Hume is right, Stroud argues, to maintain that in some sense or other of 'desire', a desire must always be present every time we perform a motivated action. According to Stroud where Hume goes wrong is to suppose that the desire in question must always be a separately identifiable factor, identifiable by the agent in his conscious experience by introspection as something extra, some-

thing over and above his purely rational considerations for action. As an alternative to this Humean theory of desire Stroud sketches a non-experiential non-introspectionist account of desire. (More positively Stroud's proposal could be described as a functionalist theory of desire, though Stroud himself does not use this term.) Stroud writes:

It might well be that to have a desire for or propensity towards E is simply to be in a state such that when you come to believe that a certain action will lead to E you are moved to perform that action....

And being in some such dispositional state might be all that having a certain desire or propensity consists in. It need not be an additional mental item that itself produces the action. (pp. 167-168)⁶

Desire on this account is defined not in terms of any intrinsic property knowable in experience but, neutrally, in terms of its function in leading along with belief to action.

Stroud does not attempt to develop this outline of a non-experiential account of motivating desire, but such an account has been recently defended at greater length in Thomas Nagel's book The Possibility of Altruism.⁷ I do not myself think that this sort of non-Humean non-experiential account of motivating desires is on the right track. Rather I believe that it is possible to give a plausible interpretation of Hume's own experiential account of desire, including the doctrines of incorrigibility and the calm passions, which comes much nearer the truth. This is what I will now attempt to do. I shall take Nagel's account as my starting point.

Nagel claims that contrary to Hume there do exist at least some cases in which reason alone -- i.e., the agent's grasp of certain purely rational considerations -- is all that motivates the action. In the context of these purely rationally motivated actions, Nagel argues, our talk of desire does not refer to any additional inclination towards, or preferences for, or sentiment about some goal that we have, but is either just another way of saying that the act is motivated, i.e., that we are in some state which disposes us to do whatever we think will lead to a certain result, or else indicates some structural feature of the reasoning behind our behaviour, e.g., indicates the fact that, in view of purely rational considerations which confront us, it would be irrational of us not to perform the act in question.

In stark opposition to this rationalist belief in the motivational power of pure reason alone⁸ stands the Humean view that necessarily desire is always a distinct motivational factor, a feeling, always operating at the time of action in addition to any purely rational beliefs the agent may hold, and in the absence of which no motivated action conceivably could be performed. Let me say what I think is wrong about the rationalist view of motivating desires. This is best done by considering some 'hard cases' for the Humean view which Nagel discusses in The Possibility of Altruism. Nagel begins by considering actions motivated by prudence -- i.e., by a person's consideration of his own future interests. Consider, for example, the action of someone who buys groceries when he is not hungry because he knows he is going to be hungry later. Setting aside the sense of 'desire' which just means 'motive' or which points to some

purely rational principle (prudence in this case), Nagel wants to deny that the shopper has any distinct desire relevant to his motive at the time of acting; for after all the shopper is not hungry at that time and has no desire to eat at that time. According to Nagel, the shopper's knowledge that he will be hungry later, is sufficient by itself to motivate his action, and this piece of knowledge is not itself a present desire of any kind but rather a purely rational consideration concerning one of his future desires. Nagel points out that Humean could try to deal with such cases by postulating a present desire on the part of the agent to satisfy all his future desires. But he thinks that this move is vacuous. For what other reason have we for attributing such a present desire to the agent at the time of acting other than the fact that he is at present acting to provide for his future? To speak of such a present desire to satisfy his future desires is just another way of saying that he is performing a motivated action which is motivated by the purely rational consideration of prudence; it is not a way of identifying some additional sentiment or preference over and above this consideration of pure reason.

It seems to me that Nagel's argument suffers from a certain blind-spot. In cases of the kind which Nagel discusses, the agent's present desire is typically present in the form of a disposition, not in the form of a distinct psychological occurrence (e.g., such as a hunger pang). I do not of course mean a behavioural disposition. To say that would be to make the vacuous move which Nagel rightly rejects. If talk of present dispositional desires merely refers to the fact that when the opportunity to go shopping arises

the agent does perform that activity, then indeed 'present desire' means no more than 'motive' and is entirely compatible with rationalism. What I do mean by speaking of the shopper's present dispositional desire is a disposition he has not just to behave in certain ways but to have certain desire-experiences which may not actually be occurring at the time of acting but which at that time must be present in dispositional form, and therefore must be accessible to the agent at that time, even if he does not seek access to them just then. Anyone who, at a time when he is not hungry, goes shopping for food for later, does have this specific experiential disposition at the time of acting: at the time of acting were he now to consider the prospect of having food when he needs it later, he would now be aware of preferring that prospect to the prospect of an empty cupboard when hungry later.

Since the shopper is not hungry at the time of acting, the disposition he now has consciously to prefer food later is obviously not a disposition to feel hungry now if he now thinks of food. But potential hunger pangs are not the only kind of desire that such a person can have, and the fact that the shopper's present desire-disposition is not of this kind does not imply that it is wholly reducible in rationalist fashion to a purely intellectual consideration. We can see that this cannot be so by considering a fictitious case in which 'reason alone' really is the only factor. Let us suppose that someone who is not at all hungry is standing in his kitchen examining his dwindling food supply. Let us grant him the full measure of rational understanding: he knows full well that if he does not go shopping today, he

will have no food to eat when he wants it tomorrow. But let us further suppose that if he now thinks of the prospect of having food when he wants it later, he has not the least tendency to favour that state of affairs, and if he thinks of the prospect of wanting food later when the cupboard is bare, he is not at all averse to that idea. How could this be? Well, perhaps he is an ascetic who thinks that frustrating his bodily desires will benefit his soul, or maybe he is so tired of living that he would not mind starving to death. In any case, whatever the explanation, let us suppose that in terms of the person's subjective experience at the time, both actual and dispositional in form, the desire to have food on hand when he gets hungry later simply does not exist. Now this is the hard case for the rationalist. For suppose we introduce into the midst of this absolute emotional vacuum,⁹ the purely rational thought "the cupboard will be bare tomorrow when I get hungry" and let us suppose that this bare idea, without arousing the least actual or potential introspectible aversion to that prospect, or any introspectible preference for its opposite, somehow impels this ascetic or suicidal person out of the kitchen, through the door, to and through the store and back again with baskets full of food. Well might he say "I don't know what hit me. I didn't do it voluntarily. I didn't want to provide for my future desires. All I know is that the moment after this thought occurred to me it drove me into 'action'. I didn't purposely go shopping, it happened to me. This obsessional thought drove me through an extended stretch of compulsive shopping-behaviour -- behaviour which was neither what I wanted to do nor what I believed might lead to anything that I wanted."

This is the kind of 'action' we are left with when we drain the last drop of experiential content from the motive of desire. While pure rationalist 'action' is not logically impossible, it never in fact happens, and when we seriously consider what it really would be like if it did happen, we find it would not count as voluntary purposive action in the fullest sense.

Nagel of course claims that purely rational considerations, e.g., considerations about one's future welfare, sometimes motivate people to act,¹⁰ not merely impel or drive people into 'action', as in the above counter-example. But that claim of Nagel's does not in itself provide an adequate reply to the counter-example, the point of which is to question the possibility of distinguishing, in purely rationalist terms,¹¹ prudential reasons motivating action from thoughts about one's future welfare causing 'action'.

To argue that since Nagelian reasons can motivate, they can motivate the shopper, does not refute the counter-example but merely begs the question that it raises.

In the above discussion I have suggested a way of resisting the attempt to reduce certain cases of motivating desire to the operation of purely rational considerations alone. I have argued that in those cases although desire is not present in the form of an additional psychological occurrence it is present in the form of an additional though unactualized disposition to have desire-experiences. On this account "A desires, at time t, some state of affairs S" means roughly "If, at t, A were to think about or seriously contemplate the realization of S as opposed to the realization of not S he would then experience an

introspectible pro-attitude towards the former prospect and/or an introspectible aversion to the latter prospect (i.e., he would then be aware of favouring the former prospect and/or disfavouring the latter)."¹² This dispositional fact about the agent, though in certain cases not a fact about a psychological occurrence is nevertheless an additional fact about him and about his introspectible experience and it is something over and above any facts concerning purely rational considerations.

Two further comments about the proposed analysis: Firstly, as it stands it does not cover the case of pathologically unconscious (i.e., repressed) desires. In this case even if the desirer thinks about or even seriously contemplates the object of his unconscious desire he is typically unaware of having any pro-attitude towards it. Frequently the attitude of which he is aware is one of aversion.

A natural way of extending the analysis to cover unconscious desires would be to include among the conditions needed to actualize the desire in awareness the removal of whatever resistance, defence mechanism, etc., is keeping it repressed. On this analysis "A has an unconscious desire for X" means roughly "A has some repression such that were it removed and were he then to seriously contemplate X he would then be aware of an introspectible pro-attitude towards the realization of X."

I believe this analysis is borne out both by the way the concept of unconscious desire is used in theories of the unconscious and by therapeutic practice.

In attributing an unconscious desire to a patient an analyst commits himself to the existence of

resistances and defence mechanisms which are at least in principle removable and whose removal would result in the patient's becoming conscious of his desire or aversion.¹³ Moreover in therapeutic practice such conscious acknowledgement of the desire by the patient is regarded as an indispensable part of the complete confirmation of any such hypothesis about his unconscious desires.¹⁴

A second comment about the suggested analysis: It is clear that a desire which is, at a given moment, unactualized in a person's conscious feelings may at that very time be operative in his behaviour. Indeed this is the very case which prompted Hume to introduce the doctrine of the calm passions. For this is the case which looks suspiciously like an example of reason alone motivating behaviour. Nevertheless on my account, as on Hume's, even in this case there is a distinct desire-factor present and operative in motivating behaviour. It is easily overlooked because it is 'calm'. On the standard interpretation, a calm passion for Hume is a very 'faint' feeling, i.e., a feeling of low intensity; this seems implausible for the reason that many people do not recall having had such faint feelings on all such occasions. My interpretation (or development) of the doctrine of the calm passions allows that such desires may not merely be 'faint' but may be wholly unactualized in the agent's feelings at the very time when they are motivating his action. Now it might be thought that this conception of the calm passions is even less plausible than the standard one. At least on the standard view there actually is something there at the time of action, some event, the occurrence of a feeling, albeit a very faint one, capable of acting as part of the cause of

the action. On my view of the calm passions it may be that all that is 'there' is an unactualized disposition, the non-occurrent fact, reported by the hypothetical "If the agent were to think, etc. then he would find, etc." How, it may be wondered, can such an unactualized disposition act as a causal factor at the time of action?

The answer in brief is that it probably can't. At least not on its own, not without some occurrent basis, e.g., some brain-state underlying it, which accounts both for the feeling disposition, and for actions motivated by that disposition at times when that disposition is unactualized in awareness. Whether reference to such an occurrent basis should be included in the very analysis of desire is not clear to me. I am inclined to think that there is no contradiction in attributing an operative though unactualized disposition to someone at a given time, while leaving it open whether or not there exists some underlying occurrent basis for it at that time.¹⁵ It might then be regarded as a further empirical question whether or not such unactualized dispositions are ever causally operative in the absence of some underlying occurrent basis.

If it were thought logically impossible for an unactualized disposition to act as a cause, or if it were thought inconsistent with the concept of a motivating desire, a neutral¹⁶ reference to an underlying occurrent state could be incorporated into my analysis of desire in a manner parallel to Stroud's functional scheme. To have a desire for S would then be to be in some state such that if one seriously contemplates, etc., then one would experience, etc.

What I now want to argue is that not only is this non-reductionist account acceptable as a Humean account of motivating desires but that it also provides a natural and defensible interpretation of Hume's own remarks concerning the calm passions, an interpretation which overcomes the objections that Stroud raises against theory of the calm passions.

At the end of Book II Section III of the Treatise Hume says that the calm passions are of two kinds: "...either certain instincts originally implanted in our natures, such as benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children; or the general appetite to good, and aversion to evil, consider'd merely as such" (T 417). And he continues, "When any of these passions are calm, and cause no disorder in the soul they are very readily taken for determinations of reason..." (T 417). Now what I suggest is that we interpret Hume's words "when any of these passions are calm" as implying that the very same long-term desire (e.g., the desire for self-preservation), that is to say, the very same disposition to feel certain urges and aversions, sometimes is calm and sometimes is not calm: i.e., calm when it is unactualized, when, that is, we are not actually contemplating the object of the desire, but not calm when it is actualized, i.e., when we are seriously contemplating the object of the desire. This interpretation is supported by a remark that immediately follows. Hume writes "When I receive any injury from another, [i.e., on the proposed interpretation, when the object of my long-term desire to retaliate against personal injury is brought forcibly to my attention -- when, in other words, I am made seriously to contemplate that object] I often feel a

violent passion which makes me desire his evil and punishment..." (T 418). Now against the proposed dispositional interpretation of these remarks it might be objected that Hume is not saying here that contemplating an injury to myself actualizes my pre-existing desire to retaliate against all injuries to myself but rather that it first gives rise to that sort of desire on the occasion of being injured. But, first of all, this objection is not supported by Hume's claim that desires such as resentment -- the desire to punish people who injure one -- are, as he puts it, originally implanted into our natures; that implies their pre-existence. And secondly, and more importantly, this objection is not supported by the passages which immediately follow the above-quoted remark, and in which Hume goes on to say: "When I am immediately threaten'd with any grievous ill, my fears, apprehensions, and aversions rise to a great height, and produce a sensible emotion" (T 418). It is plainly logically impossible for 'my desire for self-preservation to rise to a great height' if it were not previously existing at some lower level. Once again I would interpret Hume's remark as implying an experiential-dispositional account of desire: When I am not immediately threatened with injury and am therefore not seriously contemplating the prospect of being harmed, my desire for self-preservation remains present in me as an unactualized disposition of mine, but whenever I seriously think of being harmed my desire-disposition becomes actualized and I feel an introspectible aversion in connection with that thought.

This experiential-dispositional interpretation of Hume's account of desires avoids Stroud's two

objections to the theory of the calm passions that I mentioned earlier.

Stroud's first objection was that Hume has no independent grounds for believing in the distinct existence of the calm passions, i.e., no grounds independent of their alleged effects upon behaviour. But the experiential-dispositional account of desire does provide an independent way of knowing of the existence of a calm passion, namely by contemplating the object of the desire in question and discovering by introspection one's favourable attitude towards its object, and/or one's aversion towards its opposite.

Stroud's second objection was that the doctrine of the calm passions, which implies that we sometimes fail to recognise a calm passion for what it is, directly conflicts with Hume's incorrigibility thesis, his claim that we can never be mistaken about the contents of our conscious minds at any given time.

On the experiential-dispositional interpretation of Hume's account of desire it is quite possible that in the case of conscious desires, the only reason why we sometimes do not identify a calm passion for what it is, is not that we have tried to do so and got it wrong; but rather that in these cases we do not happen to think about or to seriously contemplate the object of the desire at the time of acting; i.e., at that particular moment we are not seriously asking ourselves whether we do or do not desire it and therefore have not, at that particular moment, actualized our feelings towards it. This kind of case is not uncommon. For example, if I hail a taxi because I am late for a dentist's appointment, I do not necessarily think about the object of my motivating desire (e.g., the attainment of dental health)

at the moment of acting. At that moment I'm probably too busy hailing the taxi to think about that. It is open to the Humean who adopts the proposed account of desire to claim that if at any particular time we do bother to introspect upon any of our conscious desires, i.e., if we do contemplate the object of our desire and seriously consult our feelings towards it, then it is impossible for us at that time to misidentify our feeling of inclination, indifference, or aversion towards it, (though, of course, we may misremember it afterwards). This would seem to be a sufficiently strong version of the incorrigibility thesis to serve Humean purposes¹⁷ while meeting Stroud's second criticism.

Let me briefly summarize the advantages of my proposed interpretation of Hume's theory of motivation:

- 1) By retaining a distinct desire-factor as an indispensable ingredient in all motivated action it avoids the objection which I raised earlier against Stroud's and Nagel's rationalist accounts.
- 2) By allowing that a calm passion may be an unactualized feeling disposition (or some state underlying such a disposition) it avoids the implausible standard interpretation of them as very faint or imperceptible feelings.
- 3) It reconciles the doctrine of the calm passions with a plausible version of the incorrigibility thesis: the version that claims that if we introspect carefully upon our conscious desires at any moment we cannot be mistaken about them, or at least, that we ourselves are in a better position to know what we consciously desire at any given moment, than anyone else is.

This I think is a reasonable view. From time to time we may be willing to defer to the opinion of others, e.g., impartial observers, friends, psychoanalysts, etc., concerning the nature of our unconscious desires or even concerning the nature of our conscious desires at times when we are not closely attending to them. But do we ever seriously believe that someone else may be a better judge than we are of our own carefully considered conscious desires?

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1. In calling my theory a Humean one I do not wish to defend everything that Hume says about motivation. In particular I do not think that Hume's account does justice to the full variety of ways in which reason enters into motivation. Nor do I believe that Hume establishes that reason always is (or should be) subservient to desire. My view is Humean in that I do defend what I take to be Hume's two main contentions about motivation: 1) His anti-rationalist claim that reason alone cannot motivate action and 2) his 'sentimentalist' claim that feeling is always essentially involved.
2. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed., revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 414. Further references will be cited as 'T' followed by the relevant page number(s).
3. In typical cases of habit-action more in the background than in cases of deliberation.
4. Expressible in words though often not actually verbalized at the time of action.
5. B. Stroud, Hume, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.
6. Stroud's reference to being 'moved' to perform that action raises the question what in his view does being moved consist in over and above the acquisition of the relevant belief's producing

the overt (i.e., purely physical) behaviour? Stroud might reply that in such cases that just is what being moved consists in -- i.e., rational belief leading to overt behaviour. Alternatively, Stroud might give a further non-introspectionist account of intentional action, (perhaps a 'teleological' account such as that proposed by Charles Taylor in The Explanation of Behaviour, New York, Humanities Press, 1964). I believe that all such accounts which deny an essential connection between motives and introspectible desire-experiences or pro-attitudinal experiences are open to the sort of argument set out earlier in this paper. For further criticism of teleological theories of motivated action see A.J. Ayer, "Man as a Subject for Science," pp. 14-15, in Philosophy, Politics and Society, third series, ed. by Peter Laslett and W.G. Runciman, Basil Blackwell, 1967, and J. Shaffer, Philosophy of Mind, Foundations of Philosophy Series, Prentice Hall.

7. T. Nagel, The Possibility of Altruism, Oxford: Clarendon, 1970. Nagel's theory is not quite the same as Stroud's. Whereas Nagel thinks there may be some cases in which the motive is nothing over and above purely rational (e.g., prudential) beliefs operative in behaviour (which in virtue of their operativeness we call 'desire'), Stroud thinks that motives always involve some distinct dispositional state (though not necessarily a feeling or additional mental item of any kind) - - i.e., whatever state explains the difference between agents who have a set of beliefs and act (e.g., prudently) and agents who have the same beliefs and don't.

As the following argument is directed against any account of motivating desires which denies the necessity of the experiential component it should apply equally to both Stroud's and Nagel's theories.

8. In certain kinds of choice situations.
9. This absence of relevant desire experience, actual or dispositional in form.
10. See Nagel, op. cit., p. 29.

11. Without any reference to actual or potential introspectible sentiments of aversion or preference.
12. In order to rule out cases in which A does not actually desire S at t but is merely disposed at t to acquire a desire for S, the following condition must be added to the above account: "Either at t or at some time prior to t, A has (at least) once actually experienced an introspectible pro-attitude towards the prospect of S."
13. See, e.g., S. Freud, An Outline of Psycho-analysis, chapter VI, London, Hogarth Press, 1949.
14. Ibid., pp. 43, 48.
15. For a discussion of non-occurrent causal factors see A.J. Ayer's "Man as a Subject for Science," pp. 17-18, in Philosophy, Politics and Society, third series, ed. by Peter Laslett and W.G. Runciman, Basil Blackwell, 1967, as well as Ayer's book Probability and Evidence, pp. 134-135.
16. That is, neutral regarding the specific nature of the state.
17. That is, to ensure that motivating desires are accessible to introspection -- in the case of conscious desire, accessible in practice; in the case of unconscious desire, accessible in principle.