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## Why Bother? A Historical and Philosophical Analysis of Motivation

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Why Bother? A Historical and Philosophical Analysis of Motivation

A Thesis

Presented to

The Keck Undergraduate Humanities Research Fellows Program

Of the University of San Diego

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Department of Philosophy

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While there are several competing theories of what motivation is, the exact nature of motivation and how it has been used to make impactful changes in history has not been well studied. It is apparent motivation can be seen in everyday life, such as possessing the motivation to go to work or possessing the motivation to go to the gym. However, there seems to be a more complex answer as to *why* individuals are motivated to do a certain action. Looking at a number of influential thinkers within the philosophic tradition, both Humean and anti- Humean works will be analyzed as I attempt to determine the precise nature of motivation. My research hypothesis will essentially convey the inaccuracy of Humean and anti- Humean theories in regard to motivation, and how rather, my own theory of motivation is the most accurate. In order to further show why my proposed theory of motivation is the preferred theory, I will look at historical moments in time and apply all three theories (mine, Humean, and anti- Humean) and provide further analysis as to why my theory reigns supreme. The goal of this project is to provide a distinct and accurate theory of motivation and then further apply it to real-world events. Due to history's repetitive nature, it seems as if the same actions recur. With that being said, determining the motivational role in historical events will allow us to apply that same reasoning to current and future events.

When looking at everyday life, it is apparent individuals use the term "belief" to refer to something they regard as true. Whether aware or not, individuals form beliefs all the time; for example, forming the belief that there is a coffee mug on the desk, or forming the belief that today is Friday. Forming beliefs is one of the most basic and important features in the mind and gaining a better understanding of beliefs allows us to understand their vital role in the production of motivation. In addition, gaining a better understanding of beliefs further allows individuals to

understand how they connect to the world. In our everyday lives, we are faced with moral issues and the way we approach these moral issues depends on beliefs regarding what is *right* or *wrong*, or *good* and *bad*.<sup>1</sup> After approaching these moral issues with particular underlying beliefs, we are then motivated to act upon these beliefs. However, while this may seem like a simple concept, many philosophers raise concern about the process that takes place for motivation to occur. Can an individual have motivation from purely moral belief, or does motivation occur only by the intermediation of a desire or other conative state? For the sake of clarity, “conative state” will be explained in a thorough manner. A conative state is a state that is associated with the issue of “why.” When gaining a deeper understanding of conative states, they are commonly understood as mental states that essentially “tell” an individual what they should do. For example these conative states are evident in the attempt of achieving goals. They further explain this component that leads to motivation. Philosophers have been led to differing views about motivation. These views, in turn, “have sometimes been thought to have important implications for foundational issues in ethics.”<sup>2</sup> I will attempt to discover the true nature of motivation by first analyzing Humean and anti- Humean views. In order to do this, I will focus on David Hume’s *A Treatise of Human Nature*, and Jonathan Dancy’s *Practical Reality*. In an attempt to answer this question of whether motivation comes purely from belief or only by the intermediation of a desire or other conative state, I hope it further leads to a distinct and accurate theory of motivation.

In order to offer an answer to the question of whether motivation comes purely from belief or only by the intermediation of a desire or other conative state, first, the Humean view will be analyzed. To Hume, a belief is a sentiment or feeling that is independent of our actual

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<sup>1</sup> Rosati, Connie S. “Moral Motivation.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, 7 July 2016, plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-motivation.

<sup>2</sup> Rosati, Connie S. “Moral Motivation.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, 7 July 2016, plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-motivation/.

desire and one that has influence on an individual's passions (desires). When looking at Hume's work, *Treatise of Human Nature*, it seems as if there are no degrees of beliefs. In his work, he explains the idea of beliefs, yet offers no information about the degrees of beliefs. This will be further discussed in the paper, however, this lack of degrees of beliefs doesn't account for why some desires are stronger than others. According to the Humean view, having only a belief is inadequate for motivation. In addition to the belief, there has to be the presence of a desire or other conative state. This can be seen in David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in which the subject of his discussion is known as moral psychology, the study of how we are motivated to act morally. In his work, he explains the role of reason in moral motivation, denying that "reasoning alone is ever the cause of any action."<sup>3</sup> The role of reason is to simply establish facts, and while this is important, to Hume, this cannot be the ultimate source of motivation. When analyzing this idea, it seems as if Hume is right to posit this idea that reason is not the ultimate source of motivation. If reason was the ultimate source, then individuals would always think logically when it came to their goals. However, this isn't always the case. As a result, there has to be something more that drives us to achieve a given goal. To Hume, this component is known as the passions, or what is known today, the desires. Although reason does play a role in motivation, it is not the driving force. Rather, "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."<sup>4</sup> It seems as if Hume emphasizes "the priority of passion [or desire] because it specifies the goal state, the end, the *point* of the action, regarding which factual knowledge and valid inference can provide the means toward achieving."<sup>5</sup> In order to better understand Hume's theory of motivation, a real-life example will

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<sup>3</sup> Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Wildside Books, 2007. p.1

<sup>4</sup> Hume, p. 3

<sup>5</sup> Baillie, James. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hume on Morality*. Routledge, 2009. p.89

be used. This example can be something along the lines of Sam believes the best way to make money is in computer science. Sam wants to make money. Therefore, he's motivated to get a job in computer science. If one was to apply the Humean theory to this example, it is evident that the belief would be that Sam believes the best way to make money is in computer science. The desire is then that Sam wants to make money, and therefore, he's motivated to get a job in computer science. As shown, this theory aligns Hume's theory in which motivation consists of a belief and a desire.

Although there are various anti- Humean views, they all offer a similar idea: motivation does not depend on the existence of desire, and in fact, moral belief itself can lead to motivation. This view has been held by many prominent philosophers; however, for the sake of this essay, Jonathan Dancy's anti- Humean view will be the main focus. In order to critically analyze his view, his work *Practical Reality* will be used. According to Dancy, motivation requires two distinct elements in the agent, however, rather than being a belief and desire, both elements are beliefs. In the Humean view, the desire is the element that drives the motivation. It seems correct that a Humean would say the desire is the active element, whereas the belief is not. If an agent "is to change from rest to movement, there has to be some motive force that is capable of creating this change. Desire is such a force, being an active, urgent, pushy state. Belief, by contrast, is a static state, a passive, inert, or at least inactive conception of the situation."<sup>6</sup> Dancy disagrees with this view and believes beliefs could also serve as this "active, urgent, pushy" force. In conjunction with one another, there are two distinct beliefs that could lead to motivation. Dancy calls this view, "pure cognitivism." According to Dancy, these two beliefs are the 'motivating state of the agent.' He does make the claim that where there is motivation, there will be desire; however, desire is not the part that motivates. Desire is not what motivates,

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<sup>6</sup> Dancy, Jonathan. *Practical Reality*. Oxford University Press, 2004. p.11

however it is a byproduct of motivation. It is important to make note that Dancy claims that desire is *always* a byproduct of motivation. When looking at motivation there are two factors, the reason for motivation and the reasons counter for motivation and one when one is motivated, counter to motivation, the reasons for it outweigh it. In order to explain motivation, we would need to understand what it is that motivates and that ultimately will be a belief. It seems like Dancy is claiming that motivation is not set by the individual, but by the facts of the outside world. They aren't responding to themselves, but rather what the world is bringing up. This can be seen in his work *Practical Reality*, in which he states, "We need to understand that the cognitive lies at the basis of motivation if we are to get into a position from which we can see that what motivates us is not a state of ourselves at all, but rather the nature of the situation."<sup>7</sup> Dancy seems to credit the outside world as being the source of motivation, as opposed to the individual. When looking at different types of reasons for motivation, he divides them into normative and motivating reasons. For Dancy, normative reasons are reasons favoring the action. For example, if something is good or bad and right or wrong. If something is right or moral, then it would favor the action. Motivating reasons, on the other hand, are the reasons why the agent completed the action. And for Dancy, both of these reasons have to be aligned with one another. Motivating reasons are beliefs, and normative reasons are the contents of those beliefs. In order to clearly understand Dancy's theory, an example will be applied. Similarly to the previous example, Sam believes the best way to make money is in computer science. Sam believes money will allow him to purchase a house. Therefore, he's motivated to get a job in computer science. When applying Dancy's theory, the first belief is that Sam believes the best way to make money is in computer science. There then appears to be a second belief, it can be something along the lines of Sam believes money will allow him to purchase a house. This then leads to his motivation

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<sup>7</sup> Dancy, 77

of getting a job in computer science. Now, it's interesting although the desire is not explicit, it's still there. However, rather than being direct, it appears as a bi-product of motivation. In terms of the normative reasons, in this scenario it would be something along the lines of he will make more money, and in terms of the motivating reasons, it would be something along the lines of he will make money. As shown, this theory aligns Dancy's theory in which motivation consists of a belief and another belief.

When comparing both views, it is evident that they seem to share some commonalities. When looking at each view, it seems as if both desires and beliefs play two separate and distinct roles, and are viewed as independent existences. For example, desires do not depend on other things/ elements, and are instead a distinct component. Although Dancy does not believe it is one of the distinct components that drives motivation, it is still independent. Nonetheless, while there are shared commonalities among the two, it does not change the fact that each theory possesses flaws.

When looking at Hume's theory, his argument is flawed when it comes to his interpretation of beliefs. To Hume, a belief is a sentiment or feeling that is independent of our actual desire and one that has influence on an individual's passions (desires). When looking at Hume's work, *Treatise of Human Nature*, it seems as if there are no degrees of beliefs. In his work, he explains the idea of beliefs, yet offers no information about the degrees of beliefs. This is an interesting claim to make, especially when talking about motivation. If there are no varying levels of beliefs and all beliefs with desire lead to motivation, then why do some individuals feel more motivated to do certain things than others? Is it not the strength of the belief that further causes an individual to be more motivated towards certain goals than others? The same line of thinking can also be applied when looking at degrees of desires. While he fails to make this clear,



in addition to these degrees of beliefs, there are also degrees of desires. When applying this idea to the real world, individuals possess the desire to do more things than others, such as watching a movie vs. doing homework, or reading a book vs going to work. Furthermore, Hume also claims “beliefs” play more of a passive role in the production of motivation. However, it seems like the active role is actually focused on the belief more so than the desire. To Hume, the belief is what influences the desire, however because the belief is what prompts the desire then it seems like the belief actually serves more of an active role. In order for a desire to be present, a belief of some sort has to be present first. Only through the presence of this belief will a desire *then* emerge. This line of thinking most clearly resembles Dancy’s interpretation of “beliefs.” To Dancy, there are two types of beliefs: one belief is about how things are, and the other is about how things would be if the action were to be performed successfully. By looking at both types of beliefs, it further stresses the idea that desire is not needed and in fact, belief serves as an active role to the extent that it can lead to motivation alone.<sup>8</sup> As shown, because of Hume’s interpretation of beliefs, it further conveys his failure to accurately explain what truly motivates individuals. This failure to convey what a belief truly is has to do with his lack of degrees of beliefs, as well as this passive role he claims beliefs to possess.

When further analyzing Dancy’s theory, his flaws lie in his idea of desire and how desire is *always* a byproduct of motivation. For Dancy, desire is a byproduct of motivation; however, individuals will be motivated to complete actions they have no desire for. In this case, their motivation outweighs the lack of desire. In order to clearly explain my point, further elaboration will be provided. There have been many situations in which individuals are motivated to complete an action that they lack the desire to do. For example, there have been situations in which students have to take on jobs that they don't have the desire for, but they are motivated to

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<sup>8</sup> Dancy, p.11- 13

do so because of their parents, pressure from the society, etc. In this case, the motivations from external sources outweigh their internal desires and are the central force dictating their actions. As such, desire does not play a central role in all actions. This is seen more often in situations where external forces are greater than internal desires. Rarely will the opposite occur in which internal desires outweigh external forces. Individuals tend to sacrifice what they want because of the situation that they are in.

In order to clearly pose an answer to the question, first my own interpretation of a belief and desire need to be established. A belief is an attitude towards a proposition that is independent of our actual desires. It is important to make note that when looking at this idea of propositions, it mainly refers to the meaning of a declarative sentence. A proposition can be as simple as, "I desire that I have a new house," or "I wonder whether it will rain today." A desire is a feeling of wanting something to happen, independent of our actual belief. There are two types of ideas, the desire and the actual belief, and ideally both would be in line. However, usually they are contradictory. For example, one might prefer to be twenty and prefer it greatly, but it can't be obtained. Although both mental states are independent of each other, they work together in order to produce motivation. However, although both can work together to produce motivation, it doesn't always mean that they actually do. The production of motivation ultimately depends on the certain degree of desire behind the belief. If an individual has a strong desire behind that belief, then that means there is a greater chance that the individual will be motivated and that belief will be accomplished. Likewise, if an individual has a weak desire behind that belief, then that means there is a lower chance that the individual will be motivated. Based off of this, without the desire, the belief acts as a mere statement. It has to have a certain degree of desire in order to bring meaning behind the statement. By looking at my own definition of a belief, it is

apparent that I agree with Hume in that the belief is a mere statement without the desire; however, by looking at these beliefs alone, it is apparent that there has to be a certain degree of desire in order for the belief to be executed.

In order to further attempt to provide an accurate theory of motivation, the question of whether every belief leads to motivation will be answered. Humeans claim that all motivation is by desire. Because the desire is the active role and the belief is the passive role, it seems like the question to ask a Humean would be structured a bit differently. For a Humean, the question posed is whether every *desire* leads to motivation. Although this isn't clearly stated, I feel like a Humean would agree that every desire does lead to motivation. Because there lacks a degree of belief, this seems to imply that there lacks a degree of desire as well. Anti-Humeans, on the other hand, maintain that some beliefs can motivate all by themselves. According to Dancy, he states that *some* beliefs lead to motivation and sometimes desire is not required for the production of motivation. For the sake of this essay, I will argue that every belief does not lead to motivation. Initially, it had been established that motivation ultimately depends on the degree of desire resulting from the belief. Because it depends on the desire, it is as if the belief doesn't play a significant role. As stated above, a belief is a mere proposition. And until the desire has prompted the belief will the production of motivation actually happen. Until then, the belief is simply a mere statement and plays no role in the production of motivation. Therefore, every belief does not lead to motivation. However, when approaching this question once more, it seems as if my initial reasoning is flawed, specifically referring to this idea that "until desire has influenced the belief will the production of motivation actually happen." When making this statement, it seems as if beliefs play no role in the motivation, when in fact, without the belief, the desire would not be possible! This belief is what brings about this desire, thus leading to

motivation. With that being said, my initial definition of belief must be changed. In order to accurately define a belief, it seems as if it should be viewed in terms of propositional attitudes. In doing so, it will allow me to properly answer the question of whether every belief leads to motivation, ultimately leading to my theory of motivation.

When viewing beliefs as propositional attitudes, it is evident that a belief can be understood as having a distinct attitude towards a certain proposition that they deem to be true. However, this attitude toward a certain proposition may differ for different individuals. When looking at the account of the nature of believing, it seems as if dispositionalism should be focused on for the sake of this essay. In dispositionalism, beliefs serve as dispositions to “behave in particular ways and therefore as pieces of outward physical behavior.”<sup>9</sup> There seems to be this connection between both a belief and an action. This can be further seen in R.B. Braithwaite’s two- part analysis in which a belief consists of a specific propositional attitude and an action followed, assuming that the proposition is true. Although there is a link between both a belief and action, it seems as if there are certain degrees of beliefs, and these degrees of beliefs thus lead to whether an action will be taken. When an individual has a belief at a particular moment, the belief is known as occurrent. However, if the belief is not at a particular moment, and is instead, “not at the forefront of a person’s mind at a particular time,” that means the belief is nonoccurrent. From this, it seems as if occurrent beliefs are what influence the actions.

When approaching this question again in terms of propositional attitudes, the answer becomes a bit more complex. From propositional attitudes, stems this idea of occurrent and nonoccurrent beliefs. And the only distinction between the two ultimately comes down to timing: *when* is the belief occurring? As previously stated, if the belief is happening at the particular moment, then it is known as occurrent, and if the belief is not happening at a particular moment,

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<sup>9</sup> Segal, Robert and Stuckrad Kocku. *Vocabulary for the Study of Religion*. Koninklijke Brill, 2015. p.169

then it is known as nonoccurrent.<sup>10</sup> Although it was previously stated that it seems as if occurrent beliefs are what motivate the actions, it actually seems as if both types of beliefs lead to motivation; however, now, it just depends on *when* the belief leads to motivation. It seems that nonoccurrent beliefs are just as capable of producing motivation as occurrent beliefs; and although they are not at the forefront of an individual's mind, it seems possible that they are still subconsciously leading to motivation, and thus having some sort of unconscious motivation. And through this unconscious motivation it seems as if these nonoccurrent beliefs play a vital role in the occurrent beliefs. One's past affects them in a way that the individual might not even be aware of. Regardless of being aware however, these beliefs of the past ultimately come back and play a role in the present beliefs, i.e. the occurrent beliefs. For clarity, Jim is a bully in high school. He has been kicked out of many schools because of his behavior; however, his behavior does not stop. When asking what motivates Jim's behavior, it makes sense to say that it's because he is angry and mean; however if one looks at his past, we'd find out that Jim was actually bullied in grade school. He moved on from this instance physically; however, his unconscious mind did not. In order to protect himself in the future, Jim devised a plan that motivated him to bully others before they bully him. When examining this example in a deeper lens, the non-occurrent beliefs would pertain to Jim's childhood and how he was bullied as a kid. Although these nonoccurrent beliefs may seem inactive, they influence the beliefs that Jim is having at a particular moment, the occurrent beliefs. Therefore, it would be possible to argue that nonoccurrent beliefs play a vital role in the occurrent beliefs. With that being said, if this was true, one could still make the argument that both occurrent and nonoccurrent beliefs lead to motivation.

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<sup>10</sup> Segal, Robert Alan, and Kocku von Stuckrad, p.169

My ideas pertaining to non-occurrent beliefs should be further developed. As previously stated, non-occurrent beliefs involve beliefs that are not conscious to an individual at a particular time. Rather, they serve as past beliefs that influence that occurrent beliefs. They're background beliefs that were once in the past occurrent, but are now non-occurrent. Non-occurrent beliefs are not as simple as they might seem. What is considered a relevant belief ultimately depends on the situation. Because these types of beliefs are always in the background, it's hard to adequately determine what non-occurrent beliefs are influencing my current belief in that particular instance. Most of our knowledge is non-occurrent and "only a small amount of knowledge is ever active on one's mind."<sup>11</sup> This then leads to an attempt to distinguish between the relevant and irrelevant non-occurrent beliefs in a given situation. For Frise, the occurrent beliefs that are operative in a decision or motivation is justified by non-occurrent beliefs. While this may be true, this then raises the question of how are these "non-occurrent, seemingly justified beliefs" actually justified?<sup>12</sup> In order to approach this question, it may be necessary to approach it in a similar manner as Matthew Frise. In "Eliminating the Problem of Stored Beliefs," he raises a similar question. However in order to approach this question, he views these non-occurrent beliefs as stored beliefs. In order to remain consistent, in this essay, the term "non-occurrent" will be used. He argues that the best way to solve this issue of justified non-occurrent beliefs is not through internalism alone, but through a set of dispositions that will allow internalism to "count the right stored beliefs as justified."<sup>13</sup> Before moving forward with Frise's version of internalism, it's important to provide a brief overview on the internalism/externalism debate. Internalism is the idea that justification depends on factors internal to the individual, whereas

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<sup>11</sup> Rosati, Connie S. "Moral Motivation." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, 7 July 2016, plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-motivation/.

<sup>12</sup> Frise, Matthew. "ELIMINATING THE PROBLEM OF STORED BELIEFS." *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2018, 63.

<sup>13</sup> Frise, Matthew, 63.

externalism is the idea that justification relies on factors external to the individual. Through Frise's version of internalism, individuals are able to activate their non-occurrent beliefs through mental images. For example, one could realize that they need food for a party and "immediately form a mental image of The Market."<sup>14</sup> Using an internalism approach, the internalist could then appeal to the image when explaining the justification of the non-occurrent belief. Specifically, when the individual is thinking about the non-occurrent belief, to them, the appeal to the image confirms the validity of the belief. It is important to make note that this line of thinking can be seen with occurrent beliefs as well. While this may work in some cases, it seems like approaching the issue of the justification of non-occurrent beliefs through internalism alone raises issues. Specifically, there are many non-occurrent beliefs that an individual may possess that lack an adequate mental image. It seems like an internalist is making the presumption that *all* non-occurrent beliefs have mental images. However, this is far from the truth. For example, one could have an inactive belief of when they had their fifth birthday party, but a mental image isn't associated with that certain belief. By approaching the issue through Frise's account, he seems right to say that internalism alone cannot justify non-occurrent beliefs.

In addition, there lacks a clear connection between having a mental image and justification. One might have all the sorts of mental images that nonetheless do nothing to justify any beliefs, except those about the images themselves. In addition, even if one does possess a mental image, how does that adequately justify the non-occurrent belief. Doesn't the issue of memory come into play? Specifically, the possibility that the memory of the image being used to justify the non-occurrent belief could be flawed. It seems like using internalism raises the question of the reliability of memories. In order to answer this question, it is clear we must look at psychological studies aimed at this issue of memory. However, because that is outside the

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<sup>14</sup> Frise, Matthew, 65.

scope of this paper, the issue of reliability will not be further explored. Although it won't be addressed, it's still interesting to see that this definitely raises questions.

While the attempt to justify non-occurrent beliefs is outside the scope of this paper, it's important to highlight the various avenues that come about when attempting to construct a theory of motivation. Ultimately, this further shows the complexity that comes about when attempting to explain a very vague and broad concept. Because of my disagreement with Matthew Frise's view on non-occurrent beliefs, it inspired me to look more into the matter and more specifically, try to *truly* explain how non-occurrent and occurrent beliefs lead to motivation. It led me to ask questions such as *what is the dynamic between non-occurrent and occurrent beliefs? How do they interact with each other in order to lead to motivation?* As previously discussed, my view of motivation involves both non-occurrent and occurrent beliefs; however, how they interact still remains unclear. At first glance, it seems like it's quite simple, that the non-occurrent beliefs merely influence the occurrent beliefs; however, this may not always be the case. In Eric Schwitzgebel's article "Acting Contrary to Our Professed Beliefs, or the Gulf Between Occurrent Judgment and Dispositional Belief," the relationship between these types of beliefs is a bit more complicated than the simple explanation. Schwitzgebel explains that "we often act contrary to our professed beliefs."<sup>15</sup> For example, one could argue that they have a belief in a particular situation; however, when acting upon that belief, they do something against it. In this case, it doesn't seem like there is as clear a relationship between the occurrent and non-occurrent beliefs. That in fact, it would be more complicated to explain the interaction because of the lack of inconsistency. Because of this lack of inconsistency, he raises the question of whether we could truly know whether occurrent beliefs even exist. It seems like one could argue that looking

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<sup>15</sup> Schwitzgebel, Eric. *Acting Contrary to Our Professed Beliefs, or the Gulf Between Occurrent Judgment and Dispositional Belief*, 2010, p.547.



at the subconscious level of an individual will justify their occurrent beliefs. While the non-occurrent beliefs may not be as explicit or clear, they're still there.

In order to answer this question of *how non-occurrent and occurrent beliefs interact with each other*, I also looked at Jay Wood's "Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous." Wood highlights that individuals "literally hold thousands of beliefs," too many to the point where we aren't able to keep track of all of them.<sup>16</sup> When looking at the way in which non-occurrent beliefs influence occurrent beliefs, it is clear that there are just too many of them. For example, when referring back to the Martin Luther King example I had previously provided, as King grew up and faced discrimination and injustice, he formed the belief that all men are created equal. If it wasn't for King's past experiences and beliefs, he wouldn't have had this forefront belief that all men are created equal. While it can be argued that these past beliefs influence the occurrent beliefs, there are just too many non-occurrent beliefs to *truly* say which ones specifically played a role in Luther's occurrent beliefs. Evidently, "the fact is, we cannot conjure up all the beliefs we hold..."<sup>17</sup> This inability to access all of one's past beliefs have led the individual to "muster with the three or four beliefs [they] can consciously recall that [they] believe are relevant..."<sup>18</sup> With that being said, this doesn't completely eliminate this idea of non-occurrent beliefs, it just means the way in which the non-occurrent beliefs have been explained needs to be made more precise. With Wood's work in mind, it seems like now we shouldn't look at the many non-occurrent beliefs as a whole, but rather, focus only on the few ones that an individual can consciously recall and that are relevant to the occurrent beliefs. In doing so, not only is it more realistic, but it helps better understand the way in which occurrent beliefs come about.

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<sup>16</sup> Wood, Jay, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous*, InterVarsity Press, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Wood, Jay, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Wood, Jay, 1998.

Throughout the various works explored, it also raised the question of specificity. Precisely, how specific must these non-occurrent beliefs be in order to be considered accurate beliefs that lead to a certain occurrent belief? When looking at my earlier Savonarola example, it seems like the analysis of the non-occurrent beliefs I had provided is a bit too general. The non-occurrent beliefs in the Savonarola example were seen through his passion for religion, specifically the Christian faith and how it came to be. From these non-occurrent beliefs then stemmed Savonarola's occurrent beliefs. Looking back on my analysis of these non-occurrent beliefs, there is a lack of specificity. And because there is a lack of specificity, it prevents a complete understanding of the way in which *these* beliefs played a role in the certain occurrent beliefs. When applying this to the example of Savonarola, it seems like a better explanation of the non-occurrent beliefs involves the theology education he had received, as well as his claims that Christ was speaking through him. By describing his non-occurrent beliefs in a more concise and coherent manner, it provides one a better understanding of how these certain beliefs lead to the occurrent beliefs. In addition, through the analysis of these non-occurrent beliefs it shows that it's impossible to recall every single past belief. And rather, as Wood emphasized, it's better to look at three or four non-occurrent beliefs.

As I recall the way in which I had described these non-occurrent beliefs, I realize that I lacked an established criteria of what non-occurrent beliefs should be. Through the analysis of these various works, I have realized that non-occurrent beliefs have to be ones in which an individual can consciously recall and that are relevant to the occurrent beliefs, and have to be as specific as possible.

It's important to make note that the examples I have provided throughout my paper are useful in that they give us a general picture of the way non-occurrent beliefs work in the

simplest of situations. However, it is clear that there are many situations in which these non-occurrent beliefs are more complex. That rather than being able to clearly identify them, it takes much more time and effort. Ultimately, this shows that motivation is not as simple as one thinks. And while I was able to offer an explanation of the way these non-occurrent beliefs work in some cases, many cases are much more complex and harder to understand.

Now that the criteria for non-occurrent beliefs have been established, it is important to make sure occurrent beliefs are clear as well. In contrast to the non-occurrent beliefs, the occurrent beliefs are much more simpler, and because of this their criteria won't be as demanding. Occurrent beliefs are beliefs that "occupy some sort of conscious state: that is to be 'actively aware...'<sup>19</sup> They are beliefs that an individual is currently believing are aware of them. With that being said, it seems like the criteria for the occurrent beliefs would solely have to be that the individual is actively aware of them. If the individual is aware of them, that means they are at the forefront of their mind. As shown, the criteria for the occurrent beliefs is less strenuous than the non-occurrent beliefs because of their simplicity. It is important to make note that specificity plays a vital role in the occurrent beliefs as well. In order for them to be as accurate as possible, they have to be specific. This is going to be much easier than the non-occurrent beliefs because they appear at a certain point. Because they appear at one precise point in time, the belief has to be specific to that particular moment. In addition, similar to the non-occurrent beliefs, they have to be relevant. Again, this is going to be easier than the non-occurrent beliefs because the occurrent beliefs appear dependent on the event. While the occurrent beliefs are just as important as the non-occurrent beliefs, it is evident that they don't have strict criteria because

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<sup>19</sup> Bartlett, Gary. "Occurrent States: Canadian Journal of Philosophy." *Cambridge Core*, Cambridge University Press, 1 Jan. 2020, [www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-philosophy/article/abs/occurrent-states/7D2B8EF47D81472B46D6EA9F73A36CDD](http://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-philosophy/article/abs/occurrent-states/7D2B8EF47D81472B46D6EA9F73A36CDD).

they are simpler. Having set out the views of both Humean, anti- Humean, and mine, I am now going to apply them to various historical moments in time. In doing so, I hope to show the accuracy of my theory.

The first historical moment that will be analyzed is the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement was an attempt to gain justice for African Americans by gaining equal rights under the laws in the United States. While there were many impactful and effective leaders, it is apparent that Martin Luther King Jr. was the most visible spokesperson during the Civil Rights Movement. As King observed the injustices occurring within the people, and society as a whole, he was motivated to make change. When analyzing this historical moment from a Humean perspective, it is apparent that Hume would describe King's motivation as a combination of both a belief and desire. King was motivated by many beliefs about the world, beliefs such as the apparent inequality in his society, the mentality that all men were created equal, etc. The belief would be something along the lines that the world was unjust and he had a desire for justice. Before the Civil Rights Movement, there was a distinct line drawn between both the whites and African Americans. This distinct line led to discrimination, injustice, and struggle within society. By looking at the injustices within his society, King had formed the belief that all men are created equal and with this belief, he had formed the desire to help the Black community. As he observed the struggle that the Black community was going through and the lack of progress, his main desire was to help improve the living conditions for the Black community. According to Hume this belief that all men are created equal followed by this desire to help the Black community motivated Martin Luther King Jr. to speak out and create one of the most effective and powerful speeches known today. As shown to Hume, motivation consists of a belief and a desire, and in this theory, the "beliefs" play more of a passive role in the production of

motivation. However, when applying this theory to the previous historical moment, that seems far from the truth. By having the belief that King had, it ultimately influenced his desire to help the Black community. In this case then, the belief played more of an active role. According to Hume, the belief is what prompts the desire, but if this was to be true, then the belief actually serves more of an active role than the desire. Although the desire is also seen as an active role, it's possible for both the belief and the desire to be active. I feel like this attempt to differentiate between what is passive and what is active weakens Hume's argument. It seems like Hume attempts to simplify the definition of motivation, when in reality it's much more complicated. His oversimplification can be further seen when he explains the idea of beliefs, yet offers no information about the degrees of beliefs. As previously stated in the paper, if the beliefs lack varying levels, this then raises questions as to why some individuals feel more motivated to do certain things than others? The strength of the belief is what further causes an individual to be motivated more towards certain goals, ultimately highlighting the fact that there actually is certain degrees of beliefs. Overall, although I do understand Hume's theory, I feel like the oversimplification of his argument raises many flaws.

When analyzing this historical moment from an anti- Humean perspective, it is apparent that Dancy would describe King's motivation as a combination of both a belief and another belief. As previously discussed, Dancy makes the claim that motivation is not set by the individual, but by the facts of the outside world. They aren't responding to themselves, but rather what the world is bringing up. With this in mind, the first belief would be something along the lines of racism existing in the world. More specifically, it would have to do with the mistreatments of Blacks in America. Before the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans were stripped away from many of their rights, including the ability to vote, drink from certain

fountains, and ride at the front of the bus.<sup>20</sup> According to Dancy's theory, this would be considered the belief about the current state of the external world. The second belief could be something along the idea of equality and this termination of injustice within society. This then motivates Martin Luther King to speak out. It's important to make note that although the desire isn't explicit, it's still present. This desire of wanting to speak out against the injustices faced is the byproduct of motivation. According to Dancy, the combination of these beliefs leads to motivation. King had both of these beliefs, and this in turn, motivated him to speak out. When analyzing Dancy's theory, it seems like it is more accurate than Hume's theory, specifically when looking at this idea of beliefs playing an active role as well. As previously stated, Hume believes beliefs cannot play an active role and rather, the desire is what acts as this pushy force. However, according to Dancy, "it is possible to object to Humeanism on the very simple grounds that we often do things that we do not want to do, either in themselves or as means to some end that we want to pursue or promote."<sup>21</sup> If an individual does something that they don't want to do, then this further shows that there must be something that's driving this unwanted action, a belief. With that being said, this line of thinking perfectly aligns with Dancy's theory in that rather than having a desire play an active role, it is possible for the beliefs to possess this strong, pushy force. When comparing both Hume and Dancy's theories, it seems like Dancy provides more accuracy; however, there are still some flaws in his argument that must be addressed. When researching Dancy's theory, he makes the claim that it is possible for motivation to be composed of only two beliefs; however it depends on the situation. While this may seem valid, it raises some concerns. Even though Dancy makes this claim, it doesn't seem like he goes into detail to further explain what kind of situation the individual has to be in. While this doesn't seem like an

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<sup>20</sup> *Civil Rights Movement*. History.com Editors, October 27, 2009. <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-movement>. Accessed 14 November 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Dancy, p. 10-11

important question to ask when it comes to the implementation of his theory, it raises questions in the overall theory of motivation. In order to determine the most effective theory of motivation, it has to be one that lacks as many questions as possible. Another concern that must be raised when looking at Dancy's theory is the way he approaches this idea of desire and its relationship in motivation. According to his work *Practical Reality*, it is evident that Dancy makes the claim that where there is motivation, there will be desire; however, desire is not the part that motivates. As shown, it is clear that desire does play a role in his argument; however it seems as if he conveys it to possess a minimal role in motivation. I find this very interesting considering how much he incorporates desires into his theory. According to Dancy, "desire is not the leading partner in anything, even though desire is a state that is out to change the world to be the way it wants..."<sup>22</sup> As Dancy interprets a desire to have this ability to change the world in a certain manner, I find it concerning that he makes it seem like the desire is in fact not powerful at all. Although this weakens Dancy's argument, it still seems like he offers more accuracy than that of Hume's argument.

The theory that I offer will now be applied to the historical moment of the Civil Rights Movement, ultimately in hopes of showing the accuracy in my argument. According to my own theory, motivation is a combination of two distinct beliefs and a desire. This theory can be applied to the historical moment of the Civil Rights Movement. Before the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans didn't have many rights. Martin Luther King Jr. grew up with this harsh treatment, and this mentality that African Americans lack the same rights as white people. As he grew up and experienced this mistreatment even more, he had the belief that all men are created equal. By analyzing this moment, it is apparent that if it wasn't for King's past experiences and beliefs, he wouldn't have had this forefront belief that all men are created equal.

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<sup>22</sup> Dancy, p.14-15.

When applying my theory, it is evident that these past beliefs can be considered the nonoccurrent beliefs and the belief he had when he was older can be considered the current belief. Although the nonoccurrent beliefs happened in the past, I can't help but think that these past beliefs are what influenced his occurrent belief. In other words, these beliefs of the past ultimately came back and played a vital role in the present beliefs, i.e. the occurrent beliefs. While the occurrent beliefs are the only ones at the forefront of an individual's mind, both the nonoccurrent and occurrent work together in a way to then influence the desire. As previously stated, there are multiple degrees of belief, and this degree of belief differs depending on how strong the desire is behind that certain belief. In this case, King had a very strong degree of desire. As he both observed and experienced the injustices within his society, it further motivated his desire to act upon his belief that all men are equal. This motivation is essentially the action that the individual takes because of their desire to fulfill their beliefs. When applying it to King's case, this action is essentially him speaking out and creating one of the most effective and powerful speeches known today.

The second historical moment that will be analyzed was during the Renaissance, specifically when Friar Girolamo Savonarola attempted to strengthen the religious faith among the people of Florence. During this time, Florence was in great chaos due to the corrupted government, economic crisis, and religious upheaval. In order to ease some of this chaos, Friar Savonarola was sent to Florence to take up the post of lecturer in a convent. During this time Savonarola began to preach boldly against the tyrannical abuses of the government. Ultimately, his goal was to sever the citizen's positive mentality of the government and introduce a democratic government. However, rather than creating a successful society, Savonarola's



obsession with an extreme Christian society led to utter chaos and destruction.<sup>23</sup> When analyzing this historical moment from a Humean perspective, it is apparent that Hume would describe Savonarola's motivation as a combination of both a belief and desire. As he began to preach to the people of Florence and observed these supposed flaws of the society, this led him to form the belief that Florence was in utter chaos due to the corrupted government influencing their citizens with false priorities. Following from this belief was the desire to step in and become the authoritative figure for Florence in order to help Florence. Through this belief and desire, ultimately this motivated Savonarola to change the ways of Florence and further ignite mass chaos and destruction within the society. This belief and desire had motivated him; however in contrast to MLK, it has motivated him in a negative manner. Rather than making a positive impact in society, it had actually led to the destruction of much valuable possession and artifacts, ultimately destroying years of rich history. As shown to Hume, motivation consists of a belief and a desire, and in this theory, the "beliefs" play more of a passive role in the production of motivation. However, as also seen from the Civil Rights example, this is far from the truth. As previously stated, for Hume the belief is what prompts the desire, but if this was to be true, then it seems like the belief actually serves more of an active role than the desire. Because of the formation of Savonarola's belief, it further prompted this desire and led to motivation. Through these two historical moments, it is apparent that Hume is mistaken when he describes the belief as the "passive role" and the desire as the "active role." This inaccurate differentiation raises much concern for his overall theory.

When analyzing this historical moment from an anti- Humean perspective, it is apparent that Dancy would describe Savonarola's motivation as a combination of both a belief and another

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<sup>23</sup> Ridolfi, Roberto. *Girolamo Savonarola*. Encyclopedia Britannica, September 17, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Girolamo-Savonarola>. Accessed 14 November 2020.

belief. As previously discussed, Dancy makes the claim that motivation is set by the external world. With this in mind, the first belief would be something along the lines of there is chaos and destruction apparent in Florence. More specifically, it would have to do with the corrupted government providing the citizens with false information as to what is deemed as right priorities. Because Savonrola was a devout Christian, he had formed the mentality that everything should revolve around the Christian faith. This means any distractions from God, such as art, music, and dance need to be destroyed and forbidden. In addition, he also destroyed objects, such as mirrors in order to prevent this potential obsession with one's vanity. According to Dancy's theory, this would be considered the belief about the current state of the external world. The second belief could be something along the idea of this necessity for a new authoritative figure. After the Medici family was exiled from Florence, there was a period of time in which Florence remained stagnant. They were in the process of further deciding who the next ruler would be until Friar Savonrola stepped up. This then motivated Savonrola to create this new society centered on Christian faith. Before moving on, it's important to make note that although the desire isn't explicit, it's still present. This desire of wanting to change the ideals of the society is the byproduct of motivation. From Dancy's point of view, the combination of these beliefs led to motivation. Savonrola had both of these beliefs, and this in turn, motivated him to create this new society, or at least make the attempt. When looking at the concerns in Dancy's theory, it seems like the main one pertains to the way he approaches this idea of desire and its relationship in motivation. Similarly to the previous example with Martin Luther King, the desire needs to be given more credit than he actually provides. It's been evident in both examples that the desire actually does play a huge role in motivation. He even goes on to emphasize the great importance that desire plays. And so if this is the case, it seems a bit troubling to me that continues to make

the claim that desires aren't as important as the beliefs. If Dancy was to alter his theory and provide equal importance to the desires, I feel like this would make me more inclined to his theory.

The theory that I offer will now be applied to the historical moment of the Renaissance in Florence, ultimately in hopes of showing the accuracy in my argument. As previously stated, my theory consists of two distinct beliefs and desires. The first belief, the non-occurrent belief, are the past beliefs, the beliefs that are not at the forefront of the individual's mind. In this example, it seems like Savonarola's nonoccurrent beliefs can be seen through his passion for religion, specifically the Christian faith. In his earlier years, Savonarola had expressed his passion with the Church in some of his earlier poems. As he began to take religion more seriously, he decided to join the Dominican Order, an order of the Catholic Church founded in France. After a year, he was ordained to the priesthood and would soon begin preaching and teaching. When looking at my theory, it is evident that the non-occurrent beliefs pertain to his passion for the Christian faith, and how it came to be. From these non-occurrent beliefs stems Savonarola's occurrent beliefs, this belief that Florence needs new ideals for its society, ideals that center on religion. When examining the relationship between occurrent and non-occurrent beliefs, it is evident that the non-occurrent beliefs, the past beliefs, ultimately came back and played a vital role in the present beliefs, i.e. the occurrent beliefs. These beliefs then work together to influence the desire. In this case, the desire would be something along the lines of Savonarola wanting to be the new authoritative figure of Florence. This then motivates him to carry out the action in order to fulfill this desire. In this case the action that he would carry out is preaching to the citizens of Florence, destroying valuable art and music, and essentially getting rid of anything that can be a distraction from God. By applying my theory to both the Civil Rights Movement and the Renaissance, I

hope it further conveyed the strength that my theory possesses, and the lack thereof in both Hume and Dancy's theory.

As shown, through this research both the Humean and anti-Humean view were analyzed in order to reach a complete and clear understanding of motivation. However, in attempting to find out what motivation is, it was evident that both theories possessed flaws in their argument. As a result, a new theory was formed, one that focused on occurrent and nonoccurrent beliefs. In order to show that this argument reigns supreme, it was then applied to a historical moment in time. By applying it to a real moment in history, the ultimate goal was to determine a concrete definition of motivation that can then be applied to other historical moments in time. In terms of my future research, I hope to determine whether this definition can be applied to certain groups of people, ultimately explaining the actions they undertake. In order to maintain a concrete and solid piece, it is important to focus on one group of individuals, and to be as specific as possible. For the sake of this piece, the group of individuals that will be the main focus of study are victims of sex crimes. By studying various victims, I hope to determine whether my definition of motivation provides a deeper understanding for their actions. In gaining a better understanding of what motivates groups of people, specifically in this case sex crime victims, we can then determine what motivates victims to empower other individuals to act in a manner that promotes the greater good.

As I conclude my research for the Keck Fellow Project, I have come to the realization that motivation is much more complicated than it seems. While this idea of motivation has been apparent throughout our societies, it is evident that the exact nature of motivation and how it operates in those certain societies still remains unclear. As I attempted to deconstruct various proposed theories, as well as construct my own, there were both pros and cons in each theory.

This was evident as I applied these theories to historical moments in time. Applying each to historical moments in time also showed the interdisciplinary nature of motivation. The question of motivation underwrites political questions, ethical questions, etc, and because it is so prevalent in society, understanding the nature of it is so crucial. While this project has come to an end, it would be interesting to explore the way in which motivation plays a role in various moments in time. For my project specifically, I looked at the past; however, it would be interesting to take it a step further and analyze the nature of motivation using more modern historical moments and if possible, even future historical moments. This will then allow us to gain the ability to understand whether there are commonalities between these historical moments and what that says about motivation.

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