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# The Reasons that Can't be Followed: Comment on Joseph Raz's *From Normativity to Responsibility*

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In *From Normativity to Responsibility*<sup>1</sup> (FNR), Joseph Raz develops an account of normativity whose centerpiece is the concept of a reason. The book attempts an explanation of what normative reasons are, and of why they are reasons—proving false the often repeated claim that the concept of a reason is “primitive” and cannot be explained further, unless you embark on a reductive account. Raz shows that we can make normativity intelligible without reduction.

I want to begin by sketching the broad outline of the view, and then home in on the distinction between standard and non-standard reasons, in particular with regard to reasons to intend.

## 1. The nexus and the normativity of reasons

As Raz sees it, the crucial concept that we need to explain in order to make sense of normativity is that of a normative reason.<sup>2</sup> What explains that something is a normative reason, Raz claims, is its connection to the capacity of Reason or, as he sometimes puts it, to our rational powers: only those considerations that we—qua rational beings—can respond to are reasons. They must be capable of explaining and justifying our beliefs, emotions, intentions, or actions when we actually respond to them as reasons.<sup>3</sup> Yet it is not our

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<sup>1</sup> JOSEPH RAZ, *FROM NORMATIVITY TO RESPONSIBILITY* (2011).

<sup>2</sup> This contrasts with a mere explanatory reason, as well as with other attempts to explain normativity, eg by explaining it in terms of value.

<sup>3</sup> “[T]he point is that normative reasons must be capable of providing an explanation of an action: If that R is a reason to  $\varphi$  then it must be possible that people  $\varphi$  for the reason that R and when they do, that explains (is part of an explanation of) their action” (p. 27). The formulation is modeled on Williams: “If there are reasons for action, it must be that people sometimes act for those reasons, and if they do their reasons must figure in some correct explanation of their action.” Bernard Williams, *Internal and External Reasons*, in *MORAL LUCK* 102 (1981).

actual response that makes something a reason but the fact that we *can* respond to it (once we are aware of it).

Reason does not make reasons into reasons. . . . But they are reasons because rational creatures can recognize and respond to them with the use of Reason. (p. 86)<sup>4</sup>

There seems to be a tension between these two sentences: reason does not make reasons, and yet they would not be reasons if Reason could not respond to them. Does not then Reason's ability to respond to certain considerations make them into reasons? In a way, yes. Reasons, on Raz's account, are facts which (for the most part) exist quite independently of our ability to respond to them. A fact that is evidence for something exists and is evidence, whether or not we can respond to it. Hence, our ability to respond does not make reasons into what they are. However, those facts would not be reasons if we could not respond to them: identifying them as reasons picks them out as being related in some way (to be explained) to our rational capacities. The various facts that are reasons are not unified in any other way, except by Reason's ability to respond to them.<sup>5</sup> It follows that the facts that count in favor of the truth of a belief, or the value of an action need not be reasons to believe or to act respectively. Only those that we can respond to are.<sup>6</sup>

Respond in what way though? After all, not just any response that a person may have to some fact shows that it is (or is taken by her to be) a normative reason. Perhaps a person can respond to the fact that she is thirsty by calling her mother.<sup>7</sup> But that is not a rational response.<sup>8</sup> While there may be no *a priori* limits to the causal influences that certain facts can have on us, rational responses take a determinate form. Our awareness of reasons does not just *affect* our attitudes and actions (even though it does that too; it could not explain them if it did not) but it *guides* them. At least sometimes, we respond to certain facts because we recognize that it would be rational to do so. Mere explanatory factors do not for their efficacy depend on a person's awareness of those factors. Following a normative reason, however, does. Normative reasons explain a person's behavior in such a way that her recognizing them as reasons is itself part of the explanation: "She  $\varphi$ -ed because of  $R$  which she recognized as a reason for  $\varphi$ -ing." This is not saying that we are often or even most of time

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<sup>4</sup> All page references are to JOSEPH RAZ, *FROM NORMATIVITY TO RESPONSIBILITY* (2011) (FNR), unless otherwise noted.

<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere (Ulrike Heuer, *Guided by Reasons: Raz on the Normative-Explanatory Nexus*, 2 *JURISPRUDENCE* 353–65 (2011)) I have discussed whether the view should best be understood as a response-dependence account of reasons (but not of values). I concluded there that response dependence, as it is normally understood, does not capture Raz's account of reasons, but that it also is not clear how else to understand his claims about the dependence of reasons on our ability to respond to them. While I will not reopen this discussion here, it would be good to gain a clearer understanding of the suggested view in this particular regard.

<sup>6</sup> Whether there are actually facts of the relevant kinds that we cannot respond to is a question I will not pursue here. But see Niko Kolodny, *Raz's Nexus*, 2 *JURISPRUDENCE* 333–52 (2011) for further discussion.

<sup>7</sup> The example is Raz's, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> Barring further explanation.

following reasons by explicitly acknowledging them as reasons. We may recognize them and respond to them in less articulate ways, or we may comply with them without being aware of them at all. Mere compliance is not following a normative reason though; responding without reflection and explicit recognition of the reason as a reason however can be. This gives us a first distinguishing feature of rational responses:

*(Reflective Response)* We respond to reasons reflectively by recognizing them as reasons.

This leads to the central thesis of Raz's account of normativity, "the normative-explanatory *nexus*": the claim that all reasons are capable of guiding us, understood along Bernard Williams' lines: normative reasons must be capable of explaining a person's actions when she acts for the reason.<sup>9</sup> And the explanation is of a peculiar kind: the person's recognition of the reason is crucial to the form of explanation. It is her taking a consideration to be a normative reason that explains, and—at least when she is warranted to do so—justifies, her action.

Raz generalizes Williams' claim, which was only about reasons for action, to encompass all normative reasons: reasons to act, but also reasons to form attitudes of various kinds (beliefs, intentions, emotions). All these reasons are reasons because Reason can respond to them. But, you may wonder, is there anything that Reason *cannot* respond to? What kind of responses are we talking about? We need to give content to the idea of responding to a reason.

The first part of an answer to these questions is the one I have already mentioned (*Reflective Response*): that something is the kind of thing that we can respond to by using our rational powers, only if the response can be explained by the recognition of that feature as a reason. This is meant to exclude mere stimuli. Responding to the presence of food by producing saliva, for instance, is not a rational response, since producing saliva does not depend on our awareness of a reason to eat the food. (p. 86f)

The second part of the answer concerns the inherent normativity of reasoning (*Reasoning*): certain forms of reasoning—those that involve wishful thinking, self-deception, or weakness of will, say—are irrational, and their conclusions are not warranted. Insofar as Reason exerts its influence through reasoning, there is a path that it must take from a perceived reason to a conclusion. Therefore, only some responses to reasons are rational responses. (p. 87ff) However, Raz does not side with views that make the rational appropriateness of a response depend on flawless reasoning. A response to a (perceived) reason may be inappropriate even when there is no mistake in reasoning.

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<sup>9</sup> See *supra* note 2.

This comes out in the third part of the reply: the *Maxims*. There are two maxims that Raz introduces:

- (1) A reason for belief is a fact that is part of a case for its truth.
- (2) A reason for action is a fact that is part of the case for performing the action: for the value of the action.<sup>10</sup>

The maxims specify the grounds of an appropriate response: even when there is no mistake in reasoning a person's response to what she takes to be a reason for belief (say) can be inappropriate, because the fact she responds to is not part of the truth for the belief in question.

*Reflective Response, Reasoning, and Maxims* develop various ideas that are closely related to the *nexus* claim. For each of these claims, there is a question what precisely they amount to, and whether they are true—and Raz has a lot to say in response. I am going to focus only on the Maxims here.

## 2. The maxims and the distinction between standard and non-standard reasons

Why accept the maxims? Raz begins by explaining why there are two maxims rather than just one. Why not simply say: "A reason is part of the case for the value of whatever it is a reason for?" That way we would explain the normativity of all reasons by their relation to value. Raz takes great pains in arguing that this is a misguided approach: it does not account for epistemic reasons, because truth (or true belief) is not a value. This is why we need both maxims: only reasons for actions are value-related; reasons for belief are not. If there were value in having true beliefs, we would have reason to make reality such that our beliefs become true (pp. 45, 48), and not just to form beliefs only if they are true. After all, in changing things in such way that my hitherto false belief that you own a red bicycle becomes true, something good would have happened: there would be another true belief. Do you have a reason to paint your bicycle red then to make my belief come true? Certainly not. Hence while it is true that beliefs are warranted only when we have sufficient reasons for them, and that those reasons are evidence for their truth, there is no value in true beliefs—not merely, that is, in virtue of their being true. There may of course be value in having a particular true belief, or a particular false one, for that matter, but that is a different matter. Beliefs are simply subject to the standard of truth: it is constitutive for beliefs to respond to evidence.

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<sup>10</sup> "Reasons for action...are facts that constitute a case for (or against) the performance of an action. Epistemic reasons are reasons for believing in a proposition through being facts that are part of a case for (belief in) its truth..." (p. 36). "Reasons are governed by *maxims* stating that *a reason for belief is a fact that is part of a case for having that belief*, and *a reason for action is a fact that is part of the case for performing that action*" (p. 100) (emphasis added).

Reasons for action are different though: they are related to value. It is the value of an action—or being part of the case for the value of an action, as Raz puts it—that makes something a reason for action.

This contrast between epistemic and practical reasons is generalized in Raz's introduction of the terms "adaptive" and "practical" reasons: adaptive reasons are unrelated to value; practical reasons are value-related, and even: all value-related reasons are practical reasons.<sup>11</sup>

Reasons which are value-related are practical reason . . . . Reasons are adaptive if they mark the appropriateness of an attitude in the agent independently of the value of having that attitude, its appropriateness to the way things are. (p. 47)

It seems then that, if the maxims are true, all reasons for belief are adaptive reasons, and all reasons for actions are practical reasons. But that is not quite correct. Take, eg, a situation in which believing that Cameron is a good Prime Minister would help me to get a job offer for a much coveted position.<sup>12</sup> This appears to be a pretty good reason for believing that Cameron is a good Prime Minister—it is not, however, a truth-related one. It is a value-related: It would be good if I had the belief. Because it is value-related, Raz calls this a practical reason—and it is a reason for the belief that defies the maxims. Raz calls this a *non-standard reason* for believing that Cameron is a good Prime Minister.

As Raz sees it, there are standard and non-standard reasons for everything for which there are reasons: for beliefs, emotions, intentions, and actions. The distinction that Raz sees here is between reasons that can be followed directly, and reasons that cannot be followed directly. The unifying feature of non-standard reasons, across the various kinds of reasons for attitudes and actions, is *that they cannot be followed directly* (pp. 40, 54). What is it to follow a reason directly then? Take the case of reasons for belief. Here some instances of the direct following of reasons are particularly striking: we sometimes follow reasons for belief automatically, once we recognize them as reasons. Raz proposes the *No-Gap Principle* (p. 38):

There is no-gap, no extra step in reasoning, between believing that the case for the truth of the proposition is conclusive and believing the proposition. Similarly, there is no gap in believing that the case for the truth of a proposition is inadequate and withholding belief in it. (p. 38)<sup>13</sup>

The reason in the example above that Cameron is a good Prime Minister could not be followed in this way.

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<sup>11</sup> This is, I believe, a stipulative use of "practical reasons." Ordinarily, we would assume that practical reasons are reason to act, but not all value-related reasons are reasons to act. Raz himself seems confused here. Cf. *infra* note 13.

<sup>12</sup> Adapted from Raz's example, p. 39.

<sup>13</sup> Similarly: "It is constitutive of belief that it is governed by our responsiveness to epistemic reasons, governed gaplessly, automatically as it were" (p. 97).

The No-Gap principle may give rise to the simple question why we can fail to respond to epistemic reasons at all then, if our responses to them are automatic. But there are at least three replies: (i) We can fail to recognize a reason that we have. (ii) We can believe that something is a reason which actually is not. (iii) We can fail to function rationally by responding in imperfect or irrational ways to the reasons we believe we have (wishful thinking, self-deception, akrasia). The No-Gap Principle illustrates a particularly striking instance of “following directly,” but it does not generalize. I will discuss the issue further below. But before I do so, let me summarize the terminology that Raz introduces.

### 2.1. The terminology

*Standard reasons for belief:* The first maxim governs *epistemic reasons* for belief. Epistemic reasons are standard reasons for belief, they are *adaptive* (non-value related) reasons, and they are sometimes subject to the *No-Gap Principle*.

*Non-standard reasons for belief* are practical (value-related)<sup>14</sup> reasons. They cannot be followed directly in the sense that one cannot form a belief for a reason of this kind.

*Standard and non-standard reasons for emotions.* Emotions are like beliefs: standard reasons are adaptive reasons; non-standard reasons are practical reasons. But emotions are not subject to the *No-Gap Principle*.

*Standard reasons for actions* are governed by the *second maxim*. They are *practical reasons*.

*Non-standard reasons for actions* are also *practical reasons*. But they are practical reasons that cannot be followed directly.

*Standard and non-standard reasons for intentions.* *Reasons to intend* are like reasons to act: both standard and non-standard reasons for intentions are practical reasons. Possibly, Raz thinks that reasons to intend are governed by the second maxim too (indirectly?).

Let me go through some examples to get a better grip on these distinctions.

We already considered an example of a non-standard reason for belief, and we could add the whole variety of demon-produced reasons: an evil demon considers doing something terrible to you, unless you believe that *p*. This is a practical reason for believing that *p*, and it cannot be followed directly.

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<sup>14</sup> This is a rather misleading bit of terminology. Non-standard reasons are perhaps all value-related, but calling them “practical reasons” makes it sound as though they are reasons for actions. These issues should have been kept apart. That something is of value is not *ipso facto* a reason for action: we do not have to gear up to act because something is of value—often there is nothing that needs to be done, or can be done. Perhaps the reverse is true: that all practical reasons are value-related (even though that too can be contested). But Raz simply equates the two. I will follow him here (rather uneasily) using “practical reasons” in a stipulative sense, as simply meaning “value-related reasons.” This leads to some confusion in Raz’s treatment of non-standard reasons: Raz claims (falsely, I think) that all non-standard reasons are standard reasons for something else, presumably for actions. A non-standard reason for having a certain attitude is, supposedly, a reason to bring it about that one has the attitude in question. I do not have space to discuss this problem in detail here.

Standard reasons for emotions are in certain respects similar to reasons for belief: the perception of danger leads to fear without any further step in reasoning—gaplessly, as it were.<sup>15</sup> Danger is a standard reason for fear. Raz does, however, point out that while emotions can be governed by standard reasons in this way, they need not be. They seem to be more loosely connected to reasons than beliefs. There is, for instance, normally nothing wrong with a person who does not experience fear in the face of danger. Furthermore, it is possible that the emotion does not subside as soon as the danger disappears, and the reason for it no longer obtains. The fear may outlast the perceived reason for it, the danger. Therefore, the second part of the no-gap principle does not apply to emotions.

Non-standard reasons for emotions are similar to those for beliefs too: imagine I would get the job offer if I admired Cameron as a Prime Minister. That would give me a non-standard reason for admiration, which is again a practical reason in the sense that it is value-related. I cannot form the attitude for this reason.

The distinction that Raz is tracing here has led to much discussion in recent years (often under the name of wrong kind of reasons). But Raz places it into a larger picture: he applies the standard/non-standard reasons distinction to all reasons—not only to those for beliefs and emotions. In the case of actions, a “non-standard reason for action arises out of the familiar case of actions that have a certain value only if they are not performed in order to realize that value” (p. 50), as perhaps when an action has value because it is a spontaneous expression of affection. It could not have been performed for that reason lest it loses its spontaneity. The value of being a spontaneous expression of affection is a non-standard reason for action then, because it is not possible to perform the action for that reason.

In the case of intentions, we find non-standard reasons in the neighborhood of the *Toxin Puzzle*. Raz proposes a more general analysis (of which the *Toxin Puzzle* would be a special case): non-standard reasons for intentions are “unaided independent reasons for future directed intentions” (p. 53). What Raz means by this is: they are reasons to have a future-directed intention which does not derive from the value of acting as intended (hence “independent”), and there is no other reason to act as intended or, at any rate, the agent is not aware of such a reason (hence “unaided”). To take a simple example: an evil demon threatens to torture you now, unless you intend now to visit your aunt tomorrow. There is no other reason for visiting your aunt (or you are not aware of one). The reason to intend to visit her has nothing to do with the value of visiting her. And you are aware of all this. Can you form the intention to visit her to avoid the torture? Raz’s answer is “no, not directly”—this is a

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<sup>15</sup> Thus so far the No-Gap Principle applies: there is “no further step in reasoning” when a person experiences fear in response to perceived danger, nor would further reasoning change the attitudes of a person who does not respond with fear.

non-standard reason. You can of course take indirect steps: you can call your aunt and promise to come tomorrow. That way, you would have created an additional reason—a promissory obligation—for visiting her, and therefore your “must avoid torture” reason would not be “unaided” anymore.

### 3. Problems

I will focus on Raz’s unified account of non-standard reasons: What does “following a reason directly” and “not being able to follow a reason directly” amount to in the cases of reasons for intentions and for actions?

There is a stark contrast between certain kinds of epistemic reasons (those to which the No-Gap Principle applies) and some non-standard reasons for belief. While a belief, in response to (say) a direct perception is formed automatically, it seems that there is no way (short of undergoing hypnosis or brainwashing) to acquire the belief that Cameron is a good Prime Minister in response to the non-standard reason I described.

But following reasons becomes much gappier when we look at reasons for intentions and actions. Let me focus on the case of deliberate intentional actions: actions that follow on from an explicit consideration of the reasons for them (as the agent sees them). Take a case where the agent actually forms a future-directed intention that precedes the action, which then becomes the intention-in-action.<sup>16</sup> Raz explains at length that it is by no means necessary for action—not even for intentional action—that it takes this form. Actions can be intentional without being preceded by a future-directed intention. Let us bracket all this and focus on this case because reasons are at their manifest and tangible best here. There is less blur.

Our agent surveys her options, considers the reasons for those options, and forms a future-directed intention in response to what she believes she has most reason to do. There are two steps that constitute the following of a reason here: (i) forming the intention and (ii) acting on the intention. Imagine Paula promises to meet Francois for lunch tomorrow. By promising, she creates an obligation for herself to meet him. She then forms an intention to meet Francois tomorrow, and she acts on it: she shows up at the agreed time. I take it that she followed the reason (the reason being: that she promised) directly both in forming the intention to come and in coming. But here “following directly” does not foreclose that things could have been otherwise: she

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<sup>16</sup> Raz distinguishes between “independent” and “embedded” intentions. Both future-directed intentions and intentions in action are cases of “independent” intentions. Independent intentions are intentions “one can have at a time one is not doing what the intention is an intention to do” (p. 65). This is obvious for future-directed intentions, but it holds for intention in action as well: I can be moving my hand which holds a marker with the intention of writing on the whiteboard without actually writing anything since the marker is faulty. An “embedded intention” on the other hand is “an aspect of the way the action is performed” (p. 66) when a person does something intentionally. She may or may not have an independent intention to act in this way. See pp. 65–70.

might not have formed any intention right then, for instance; or, come tomorrow noon, she might have failed to get her act together, or kept searching for her house keys for the rest of the afternoon; or she might have mistaken the time, or forgotten about the promise altogether; or she might have decided to flout her obligation feeling irrepressibly rebellious. The response is not inevitable and automatic, even though the reason (that she promised) is a standard reason for intending and acting. The remaining analog to gaplessness is that there is no further step in *reasoning* when Paula does form an intention, and when she acts on it. She then forms the intention for the reason that she promised, and she acts for the reason that she promised. I take it that this is what Raz means by “following a reason directly.” The reason is sufficient to explain the intention, or the action, and, other things being equal, to justify it (“other things being equal,” because there may of course be other reasons bearing on the situation which may suggest that, all things considered, Paula should not keep her promise). If she acts for the reason that she promised, the action can be explained by her awareness of the normative reason. Thus “following directly” is in keeping with *Reflective Response*, and with the No-Gap Principle in so far as there is no further step in reasoning when Paula responds to the reason.

How about non-standard reasons then? Take the case of a non-standard reason for an intention.

*Cinema.* Ellie has a reason to now intend to meet her good friend Paul at the cinema tomorrow, the reason being that Paul is very nervous because he plans to go there with a new love-interest, and knowing that Ellie intends to come as well would calm Paul's nerves now.

Clearly it would be good if Paul were not all in a fluster in the run-up to the event. As it happens, Ellie has no interest in seeing the film that is on tomorrow, and she does not believe that her actual being there would do Paul any good. But it would do him good to calm down now, and her intending to show up could achieve that. She would not have any reason to actually go to the cinema (as she knows now), but she has a reason to intend to go. Is this a reason she cannot follow directly? That is: is it the case that she cannot form the intention for that reason? It seems that she cannot. The best she can do is play-acting: tell Paul that she intends to come, even though she does not. (Given that this may be sufficient to reap the benefit, the problem would be solved. We have to add that Ellie being a terrible liar, or Paul being a crack mind reader, Paul would know if she just pretended.)

While Ellie cannot follow the reason directly, she can follow it indirectly. Here “practical reason” changes its meaning from the stipulative sense<sup>17</sup> in which I have used it so far (as simply meaning “value-related”) to its normal meaning (ie reason for action): Ellie can follow the reason by bringing it about

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<sup>17</sup> See *supra* notes 10 and 13.

that she has the intention through acting in certain ways. Perhaps she could see a hypnotist who may be able to instill it.

The explanation of why she cannot follow the reason directly may be that following it does involve a further step in reasoning (reasoning from “my having the intention would be good for Paul” to “a means to having it is seeing a hypnotist”); and it can appeal to the maxims: claims about which kinds of considerations can be appropriately followed in forming an attitude. But surprisingly, Raz has not given us a maxim for intentions. Yet he seems to appeal implicitly to something like a maxim for intentions, when he maintains that following a non-standard reason for an intention

violates some necessary condition for having an intention . . . when the reason for the intention does not provide a reason for the action. (p. 54)

Translating this into the form of a maxim, we get: *a reason to intend is a consideration that is part of the case for the value of the intended action.*<sup>18</sup> It may look as if the example vindicates this maxim: Ellie cannot follow the reason because it is not part of a case for the value of the intended action. Now here is why I doubt that the above case shows this. It is a case of having a reason to intend when there is no reason to act as intended. But take a slightly different kind of case where there is a reason to act as intended, but also a reason to intend which is independent of the value of the intended action.

*Amended Cinema.* Just vary the example slightly by assuming that Ellie would actually like to see the film.

The reason that intending now to go to the cinema tomorrow would calm Paul down in conjunction with the fact that Ellie would like to see the film may well be her reason to intend to go the cinema tomorrow. The supposed non-standard reason makes a real difference here: without it Ellie may have decided to go on a different day, or perhaps not at all. After all, there are many films that she would quite like to see, but cannot find the time to go to. So the non-standard reason is now, it seems, a reason that she can follow directly. But then the very same reason is in the one case a consideration that cannot be followed directly, and in the other case a consideration that can be followed directly.

All this is, by the way, covered by Raz’s formulation, because the reason (in *Amended Cinema*) is not “unaided” anymore. It has received help from the fact that Ellie is interested in the film. But it seems strange that a non-standard reason changes its stripes in this way, and become a standard reason (albeit one that still defies the relevant maxim<sup>19</sup>) when there is a standard reason for acting as intended as well. Alternatively, we may be tempted to say that the supposed

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<sup>18</sup> Raz seems to reject this in footnote 36 where he claims that non-standard reasons to intend do conform to the relevant maxim (which he has not, as far as I am aware, specified). I am not clear why he thinks so.

<sup>19</sup> I assume now that Raz could be persuaded to accept the maxim for intentions that I suggested as in keeping with, and perhaps entailed by, his approach.

non-standard reason for intending is simply a reason that, on its own, is not sufficient to warrant forming the intention. Any sufficient reason for forming an intention must include a reason for performing the intended action. Or perhaps there is a different explanation why the reason functions normally in conjunction with a reason of a different kind, but not without it. At any rate, Raz owes us an explanation. After all, he simply identifies non-standard reasons with reasons that cannot be followed directly. Having company does not change the character of the reason in *Amended Cinema*. Why then can it, being a non-standard reason, be followed directly?

Mapping the standard/non-standard reasons distinction on the contrast of reasons that can, or cannot, be followed directly leads to problems with other kinds of reasons as well. Take reasons to believe: some non-standard reasons cannot play a rationally acceptable role in forming beliefs at all. The fact that an evil demon will abstain from torturing me if I believe that  $p$  is a reason that could not be rationally followed, no matter what my other reasons are. In *Amended Cinema* by contrast, Ellie would be rational in considering her non-standard reason for forming an intention. If I have an independent reason to believe that  $p$ , the fact that believing that  $p$  will also spare me the torture is fortunate, but it does not strengthen the case for the belief, or give me an additional reason. And yet, if self-deception is possible (as Raz seems to think it is), I can form the belief for that reason nonetheless: is not that a case of following the reason directly? As Raz sees it, I would not be following the reason even then—it would just seem as if I did. But why? Because it involves self-deception? Because following the reason would be irrational? If so, perhaps we should understand “following directly” all the way as “following rationally.” But that would get us in trouble elsewhere: after all, a weak-willed person who acts irrationally presumably does follow the reason for her weak-willed action directly. There is no further step in reasoning: the agent’s awareness of the normative reason is sufficient for explaining her action. But if the irrationality of the weak-willed person’s response does not bar it from being a direct following of a reason, nor should it lead to dismissing the self-deceived person’s response.

Why then can non-standard reasons not be followed directly? In the cases of irrational beliefs or actions alike, the following of the reason could presumably not be achieved in *reflectively* responding to the reason. If the agent were fully aware of the irrationality of her response, she would not be able to pull it off. Let us assume that this is why Raz wants to deny that responding to a reason by forming a self-deceived belief should count as following that reason directly.<sup>20</sup>

But then compare the demon-example to a different non-standard reason for belief:

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<sup>20</sup> If this were Raz’s reason for denying that the self-deceived person’s forming of a belief is the direct following of a reason, he may be committed to accepting that the same is true of the weak-willed person.

*Friendship.* There is some evidence that my friend has committed a heinous crime. I find the evidence strong, but not absolutely conclusive. In this case, my loyalty to my friend may be my reason, and it may even require me, to suspend belief. I accept, however, that those who do believe her guilty on the very same evidence are not irrational: they have sufficient reason for doing so.<sup>21</sup>

Here again it looks as though I am following a non-standard (because non-truth-related) reason directly—again defying the relevant maxim. The difference between this case and the demon case is that here everything is aboveboard: I do not deceive myself in order to regard the fact that the suspect is my friend as relevant. Note that my loyalty cannot play this role when the evidence is conclusive. It functions as a reason only when the evidence is sufficient, but not completely compelling: when both believing that she is guilty and not believing that she is guilty are rationally acceptable. The loyalty is, in this case, a reason (rather than a factor which causally influences me toward believing her not guilty) if it requires me to believe her not guilty. If this is the right way of describing the normative situation (as I believe it is), then “she is my friend” is a reason for not believing that she is guilty. A stranger would have been warranted to believe her not guilty too—after all, there is still some room for doubt—but he would not have been required to do so. In this case, I can reach my conclusion in a fully explicit reflection on the strength of the evidence: since I find that the evidence is not absolutely compelling, I conclude that, as she is my friend, I must believe that she is not guilty. The reason to form an intention in *Amended Cinema* is similarly aboveboard. In both cases, the supposed non-standard reason is relevant only in cases where there is sufficient evidence for the truth of the belief or—in the intention case—where there is (believed to be) value in the intended action. But when these conditions are satisfied, the non-standard reasons seem to be admissible as further reasons—and in both cases they make a difference to the conclusion.

Thus, there is a difference with regard to our ability to follow the demon-related reason to believe and the reasons in *Amended Cinema* and *Friendship*. They are all non-standard reason (in so far as they defy the relevant maxims) and being a non-standard reason means, as Raz sees it, that the reason cannot be followed directly. It is quite unclear though what “not being able to follow directly” is supposed to come to. In the demon case, the reason can be followed only by a self-deceived person or by a person who takes indirect measures. But it is not clear why self-deception at least is not a way of following the reason directly. In *Amended Cinema* and in *Friendship* the respective reasons are, by all the criteria that we considered, followed directly. And yet, they do not cease to be non-standard reasons I take it.

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<sup>21</sup> This is a riff on an example from Conor McHugh, *The Illusion of Exclusivity*, EUR. J. PHILOSOPHY (2013).

Raz's "test" for non-standard reasons (a reason that cannot be followed directly) seems to point in the wrong direction anyway. Its natural reading is that there is a psychological limit to our ability to form certain attitudes. In that case, those who would be able to overcome the psychological limitation might have acquired an ability that the rest of us lack. But that of course is not what Raz intends (cf. p. 54). Responding to a (perceived) reason will count as following that reason only if following it "is possible given the nature of that reason" (p. 54). And that in turn is not determined by our psychology. We cannot follow a reason, the idea seems to be, when it would be irrational to do so. However, I explained above why this would not do by comparing self-deception and weakness of will—both cases of irrational responses, but at least the weak-willed person is following a reason directly, while Raz denies that the self-deceived person does. Alternatively, we could try to capture the underlying idea by putting the maxims to work: a reason is non-standard if following it would not be an appropriate response, and the grounds for appropriate responses are specified in the maxims. But if this is the right interpretation we could presumably do away with "cannot be followed directly." We have seen that—on any natural understanding of what this means—non-standard reasons can sometimes be followed directly. In order to dispel appearances, Raz seemed to respond that in those cases they are not followed directly, because the response would not be appropriate, given the nature of the reason, and therefore the apparent following does not count as following a reason. But it now seems that it does not count as "following directly" only because following the reason violates the maxims. So we could simply say that non-standard reasons are reasons that violate the maxims. The story about reasons that cannot be followed directly would become redundant, and all the weight would be on defending the maxims. This is not Raz's strategy—but I am not sure how else to understand his response to cases in which it seems that we follow non-standard reasons (be it in full knowledge as in *Amended Cinema* and *Friendship*, or through self-deception as in the demon case). Perhaps it also could not be Raz's strategy because he notes that non-standard reasons for actions and intentions do not violate the maxims. I tried to show that this is false in the case of reasons for intentions (at least if Raz would accept my formulation of the relevant maxim). But it may be right in the case of reasons for actions.<sup>22</sup> Thus while Raz's attempt to explain what it is to be guided by a reason through the three features I identified in the beginning (Reflective Response, Reasoning, and the Maxims) is intriguing, it does not seem to be complete just yet. It is quite unclear what "not being able to follow a reason directly" amounts to, and in turn, what, if anything, unifies Raz's "non-

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<sup>22</sup> For what it is worth, it seems to me that Raz's non-standard reasons for actions have very little in common with non-standard reasons for belief and intention. Grouping them together does not seem to advance understanding.

standard reasons". It is also not clear what the role of the maxims is. Allegedly, they are relevant to explaining standard reasons, but they (or their violation) seems to play no role in the explanation of non-standard reasons.

Whether or not my qualms about Raz's take on non-standard reasons are warranted, there is of course a lot more to the ambitious enterprise of explaining normativity that the book undertakes. In particular, the idea of the normative-explanatory nexus is unaffected by what I said, and it may be the most far-reaching and important contribution to the explanation of normativity. It develops Williams's original idea in a way which is quite unexpected, and powerful.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> I presented an earlier version of this comment at a symposium on *From Normativity to Responsibility* at King's College London. I am grateful to the participants of the symposium, and in particular to Joseph Raz and David Enoch for helpful comments.