

# Weakness of Will and Its Connection with Practical Reasons

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Thesis Submitted to the University of Nottingham for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2018

## **Abstract**

This thesis pursues two main goals. First, it aspires to develop a plausible account of weakness of will that can make sense of our attribution of weakness of will to a range of cases. My proposal to account for weakness of will is that weakness of will arises when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. The idea that a proper analysis of weakness of will involves, among other things, the claims about good enough normative reasons leads us to the second purpose of this thesis. This is to consider what happens when the proposed account of weakness of will is conjoined with a theory of reasons. The motivation for doing so has twofold. First, I take it to be a completion of my proposed account since I believe that a proper understanding of weakness of will needs to make use of the notion of practical reasons. Second, this will be an attempt to bridge the gap between two relatively independent debates, the dispute over “weakness of will” and “practical reasons”; and I take this to be a distinctive contribution of my thesis. To elaborate my proposal further by adding to it a theory of reasons, I will combine the proposed account of weakness of will with Humeanism and Kantianism in turn, and consider the implications of the resulting conjoint view.

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis has come into existence as a result of the support and help of many people to whom I am extremely grateful.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Penelope Mackie and Dr. Christopher Woodard, who have been so generous with their time and knowledge, and provided excellent support, guidance, constructive comments and great encouragement.

My special thanks are extended to the staff members of the Department of Philosophy and the School of Humanities at the University of Nottingham for their help and support.

The greatest debt I owe is to my parents whose love and support are endless and unconditional. This thesis would not have been possible without their sacrifices, patience, support and encouragement.

I am also highly indebted to Rachel Chard for her constant support, help and great encouragement throughout this journey.

Further, I would like to express my great appreciation to those who directly or/and indirectly support and help me throughout my studies.

*To My Parents*

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

“Weakness of will” is a topic which has attracted great attention in the literature. It is an interdisciplinary subject that has been of interest to a wide range of scholars including those interested in “Theory of Action”, “Freedom of Will” and “Rationality” as well as those who work in the fields of Psychology and Neuroscience. It is a subject for discussion among not only various academic and scientific disciplines but also typical people. Weakness of will seems to be a common phenomenon in our day-to-day lives; and this makes it even more fascinating.

In philosophical discussion, the debate about “weakness of will” has a long history which can be tracked back to early Greek literature. For instance, in *Protagoras* (351-8), Plato’s Socrates denies the possibility of weakness of will—where weakness of will is identified with *akrasia* and characterised as intentionally and freely acting against one’s better (or best) judgement. As Socrates sees things, it is impossible that one knowingly, consciously and willingly chooses a certain course of action while believing that the alternative is better than this course of action. Cases where one apparently acts against her/his knowledge of what is best, for Socrates, result from her/his ignorance of what is truly best (358b-c) (Plato, 1961, pp. 348-349).

The question of the (im)possibility of weakness of will has been a matter of long-standing dispute among philosophers ever since. In addition to this issue, the notion of weakness of will has also become a subject of considerable

debate in the literature.<sup>1</sup> In his book, *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* (2009), Richard Holton challenges the traditional concept of weakness of will while arguing for the idea that weakness of will has something to do with one's intention, but not her better (or best) judgement. On his view, weakness of will is, roughly, to act contrary to one's prior intention too readily (Holton, 2009, pp. 70-71).

Leaving aside the question of the (im)possibility of weakness of will, it is the question of the notion of weakness of will that interests me. Intuitively speaking, the agent may display weakness of will in cases of judgement-violation as well as intention-violation.<sup>2</sup> If so, this means that the traditional and Holton accounts can each make sense of some cases intuitively seeming to be cases of weakness of will. However, neither of these views is by itself able to accommodate both judgement-violation and intention-violation cases in which the agent may show weakness of will in acting as she does.

If our intuition is on the right track, the question is what there is in all these cases that makes them cases of weakness of will. Moreover, there is a question of whether there is any case where the agent seems to show weakness of will, but she does not violate her better (or best) judgement or intention. Further, is there any way to account for weakness of will such that it can capture every case where we attribute weakness of will to the agent? It is these lines of enquiry that I am disposed to follow.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Beebe (n.d.; 2013), Dodd (2009), May and Holton (2012) and Mele (2010; 2012).

<sup>2</sup> The terms "judgement-violation" and "intention-violation" are borrowed from May and Holton (2012).

To offer and develop a plausible philosophical account of weakness of will, my attempt involves an overarching issue. To see whether a given case is a case of weakness of will, I refer to intuition.

There has been widespread debate over the reliability of intuitions and the legitimacy of appealing to armchair intuitions in philosophical investigation. It is beyond the scope of the present work to argue for and against one side or other. However, it is hard to deny the role of intuition in philosophical methodology. Of course, this does not mean that our intuitions are always accurate. Nor is it the case that we always have the same intuition about a given case (Symons, 2008, p. 67; Talbot, 2009, pp. 157-158).<sup>3</sup> If so, one might question the reliability and accuracy of the intuitions to which I am going to appeal in this investigation.

Although this is a sensible question, I do not wish to argue for the authority of exercising intuition in this philosophical study. Further, I should admit that I hardly have anything to prove my intuition about whether a given case is a case of weakness of will is correct. Nonetheless, to take a starting point for discussion and providing an account of weakness of will, I take it for granted that my intuition about whether or not a given case is a case of weakness of will is on the right track.<sup>4</sup> As a result, my methodology would partly be to track my intuitions. I do so because I take it that the purpose of the philosophical theory of weakness of will is at least in part to elaborate in a coherent way what common sense thinks about this phenomenon.

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<sup>3</sup> For more discussion on intuition and its role, see Fedyk (2009), Tobia (2015) and Vaidya (2010).

<sup>4</sup> After offering my account of weakness of will and clarifying some of its chief components and features, I will briefly point out the results of the empirical work done by May and Holton (2012) in chapter 4. I will do so in order to show that the intuitions to which I appeal for developing a view of weakness of will is in line with common-sense intuitions.

In my attempt to accomplish the present project, the use of intuition is not the only methodology I will adopt. As a further research methodology, I will refer to various philosophical literature and consider a selection of the most influential and prominent views on the relevant issues. By studying them in depth, I will develop my own view in response to them.

My proposal to account for weakness of will is that weakness of will arises when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough (or sufficiently weighty)<sup>5</sup> normative reason; where these practical commitments are ones to which she is subject in the process of those of her actions done intentionally, consciously and freely.

The idea that a proper analysis of weakness of will entails, among other things, claims about good enough normative reasons leads us to the second task of this project. That is to combine the proposed account of weakness of will with some prominent theories of reasons, and consider the implications of conjoint views. Where by “conjoint view”, I mean the view arising from conjoining my proposed account of weakness of will and a certain theory of reasons. The motivation for doing so is twofold. First, I take it to be a completion of my proposed account since I hold that a proper understanding of weakness of will needs to make use of the concept of practical reasons. Second and more significantly, this will be an attempt to bridge the gap between two relatively independent debates, the discussions of weakness of will and practical reasons; and I take this to be a distinctive contribution of my thesis.

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<sup>5</sup> I use “good enough” and “sufficiently weighty” interchangeably.

Further, examining some possible outcome(s) of the combination of the proposed account with some theories of reasons brings up some methodological issues. More precisely, it raises the question of whether there is any methodological priority to our views in the two areas. Since various philosophical theories of reasons may have different views on reasons, different implications may arise from conjoining those theories with the proposed account of weakness of will. If that is the case, there is a question about whether it is legitimate to take those implications as a consideration for and against one theory of reasons or other. Further, if we get an unwelcome implication from combining a theory of reasons with the proposed account, there is a question about whether it will be evidence against the proposed account of weakness of will, or against the theory of reasons in question. Alternatively, it might be taken against neither, but an interesting finding.

Taken as a whole, this thesis pursues two chief aims. First, it aspires to give a plausible account of weakness of will that can make sense of various cases where the agent seems to exhibit weakness of will in acting as she does. Second, it seeks to consider the implications of combining the proposed account of weakness of will with some theories of reasons.

In pursuit of my ends, this thesis comprises three parts. The first part, consisting of chapters 2 and 3, serves to give some background on some existing accounts of weakness of will in the literature.

More specifically, chapter 2 aims to provide some insight into the traditional view. To this end, I will concentrate on Davidson's account of weakness of will as a prominent traditional one. To better understand his view of weakness

of will, I will first explain Davidson's approach to the puzzle of weakness of will and his theory of intentional action. Then, I will expound his account of weakness of will according to which weakness of will is a matter of intentionally and freely failing to comply with the principle of continence. Having spelled out Davidson's account, I will illustrate that there are cases in which the agent intuitively seems to exhibit weakness of will, but which cannot fit into Davidson's account. That is because she does not violate the principle of continence in acting as she does.

In chapter 3, my concern will be to examine the account of weakness of will offered by Richard Holton (2009). I will focus on his view for at least two reasons. First, I deem Holton's view (2009) to be opposed to the traditional account. As mentioned earlier, in his book, *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* (2009), Holton argues against the traditional notion of weakness of will while defending the view that weakness of will is, roughly, a matter of over-ready acting contrary to the agent's prior intention. Second, his view is able to make sense of those cases which Davidson's account fails, cases given in chapter 2.

Having explained Holton's view of weakness of will, I will point out two issues concerning some of Holton's ideas. The first one relates to his claim that avoiding weakness of will is achieved by abstaining from over-ready reconsideration. I will illustrate the possibility of cases where the agent manifests weakness of will, as Holton understands it, although she does not engage in over-ready reconsideration. Second, Holton's principles of the rationality of (non-)reconsideration are such that they might sometimes put the agent in circumstances where she would be accused of irrationality whatever she does.

It is worth noting that these two issues have nothing to do with his underlying idea that weakness of will consists in an agent acting contrary to her prior intention too readily. That is, we may, in my view, attribute weakness of will to the agent once she ceases her prior intention too readily and takes an action opposed to the one she had intended to take.

I will end chapter 3 by sketching Mele's suggestion for understanding weakness of will. The motivation for doing so is twofold. First, his view provides a response to Holton's view. Second, it supports my idea that the agent may display weakness of will in both kinds of case, namely, cases of judgement-violation and cases of intention-violation.

Mele (2012) agrees with Holton that the agent shows weakness of will in over-readily acting against her prior intention, and admits that the traditional concept of weakness of will fails to capture this case (Mele, 2012, p. 21). Nonetheless, he does not accept that weakness of will is better understood in terms of violating one's prior intention too readily. Instead, he suggests broadening the notion of akrasia such that it captures not only cases of judgement-violation but also intention-violation. As Mele understands it, these two sorts of cases entail some kinds of practical commitment, the *evaluative* and *executive* commitments, in his terminology. If so, akrasia (or weak-willed) actions<sup>6</sup> can, Mele proposes, be characterised in terms of violating *evaluative* and *executive* commitments (2012, pp. 14-16).

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<sup>6</sup> Mele takes akrasia and weakness of will to be identified (2012, p. 15).

Mele's idea is the line of thought that I am disposed to follow in order to give my positive account of weakness of will. This will be the task of the second part of the present work.

Part 2 sets out to develop a plausible account of weakness of will and examine its adequacy. My proposal is that the agent manifests weakness of will when she withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason; where these practical commitments are those to which she is subject in the process of her intentional action done consciously and freely. This means that in the discussion of weakness of will, I will leave aside the actions that are not treated as intentional, conscious and free ones. Further, although it might be controversial, for the sake of simplicity, I take the view of intentional action that Bratman calls the *simple view* (1999, p. 112). That is, I assume that the agent's intentional action done consciously and freely manifests the intention with which she acts as she does.

Having proposed this account of weakness of will at the beginning of chapter 4, I will concentrate on clarifying this view in the rest of this chapter. That is, I will elaborate some of its chief components, essential features and how I see the relation between some of these elements. At the end of chapter 4, I will discuss some implications of the proposed account and answer some possible questions.

Chapter 5 will examine the adequacy of my proposed account of weakness of will. To do so, I will first address two rival views, labelled the standard and modified rival views. Having clarified the difference(s) between these two rival

views and mine, I will offer some concrete cases, and consider the application of these two rival views as well as mine to these cases. The results will indicate not only the adequacy of my proposed account but also its superiority over the standard and modified rival views.

The proposed account of weakness of will may raise the question of what it is to be a good enough reason in a normative sense. Undoubtedly, this is a sensible question since our stand on what it is to be a good enough normative reason plays a crucial role in determining cases of weakness of will. Nonetheless, it is beyond the scope of this work to argue for one way of understanding a good enough reason or other. Instead, I will combine the proposed account of weakness of will with some prominent theories of reasons, and examine the implications of the resulting conjoint views. This will be my concern in part 3.

Having fulfilled the first purpose of this project, part 3 will be designed to undertake the second task, which is to consider the implications of conjoining my proposed account of weakness of will and some significant theories of reasons. This is, as previously mentioned, an attempt to bridge the gap between two relatively independent debates, the dispute over the notion of weakness of will and the debate on practical reasons. I view it as the main novelty of my thesis. This attempt will provoke the following methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to take as a consideration for preferring a theory of reasons that it has the right (or better) implications for cases of weakness of will. To show how my proposal can be developed further in the way explained above, I will consider the Humean and Kantian theories of reasons in chapters 6 and 7 respectively.

Chapter 6 will examine what happens when my proposed account of weakness of will is conjoined with the Humean theory of reasons. To consider the implication(s) of this conjoint view, I will first briefly explain the broadly Humean view of normative reasons. I will then sketch the standard Humean approach to the weight of reasons, the view called *Proportionalism*. Having combined the proposed account of weakness of will and a broadly Proportionalist Humeanism, this conjoint view implies that weakness of will hardly ever occurs, if at all. Since this implication will question the plausibility of the proposed account of weakness of will, I will offer some responses to this challenge.

Among other lines of defence, I will argue that it is not obvious that this implication is problematic at all. Instead, it may be treated as interesting. More importantly, it will be argued that it is not the case that the combination of the proposed account and Humeanism necessarily gives rise to this implication. Rather, there are some versions of Humeanism, for instance, Smith's idealising account and Schroeder's Hypotheticalism, that do not yield this implication when they are combined with the proposed account of weakness of will.

Having answered the challenge under consideration, I will then outline what these results mean to those advocates of my proposed account who gives a positive answer to the following methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to take the results of examining the implication of the conjoint view at issue as a consideration in favour of or against Humeanism.

To these advocates, the results will suggest that if the implication that weakness of will hardly ever occurs is regarded as interesting, it may be taken,

among other things, in favour of broadly Proportionalist Humeanism. If it is deemed problematic, it may be viewed as evidence against broadly Proportionalist Humeanism, and to support the idea that some other versions of Humeanism, such as Smith's idealising account or Schroeder's Hypotheticalism, are superior to broadly Proportionalist Humeanism.

In chapter 7, the implication(s) of conjoining my proposed account of weakness of will and the Kantian theory of reasons is the subject of discussion. I will first explain the Kantian notion of reasons for action. Having made clear that an action is, on the Kantian view, permissible (or objectively good) only if its maxim conforms to the categorical imperative, I will clarify why this is the case. Then, I will spell out the Kantian approach to determining whether a given maxim is in conformity with the categorical imperative by referring to the Formula of the Universal Law of Nature and the Formula of Humanity. Finally, I will consider the implication(s) of my proposed account of weakness of will combined with the Kantian theory of reasons. This conjoint view will yield at least two challenging implications. First, the conjoint view seems to imply that too many cases will turn out to be cases of weakness of will. I will term this implication the "Too Many Cases objection". Second, the conjoint view will apparently imply the impossibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will.

As regards the Too Many Cases objection, I will address some possible lines of defence. Among them, I will exemplify that cases of weakness of will may not, on the conjoint picture, be as frequent as they initially seem to be. With respect to the second challenge based on inverse akrasia, I will illustrate that it is not the case that the combination of the proposed account and

Kantianism gives rise to the impossibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will.

Having dealt with these two difficulties, I will clarify what the results of considering the implications of the conjoint view at issue suggest to those advocates of the proposed account who give a positive answer to the following methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to take account of these results in determining the (im)plausibility of the Kantian theory of reasons. The results will indicate that both of the implications under consideration fail to undermine the plausibility of the Kantian theory of reasons.

In the Conclusion, I will first sketch the two chief aims pursued in this thesis. Then, I will give a brief summary of the main chapters. Having taken the findings of this study together, it will be clear that my proposed account of weakness of will is superior to some rival views. Of course, some questions will be left open in this thesis. Nevertheless, I will remain optimistic that the proposed account can give us valuable insights into our attribution of weakness of will to a wide range of cases. I will end this thesis with mentioning what avenues for further research this piece of work suggests.

## Part 1

### Chapter 2. Weakness of Will in Terms of Acting against One's Better Judgement

The present chapter provides some background to one of the dominant accounts of weakness of will in the literature, the account commonly called the traditional one. Further, it seeks to show that the traditional account is not by itself broad enough to capture some cases where the agent intuitively seems to manifest weakness of will.

On the traditional view, acting with weakness of will, identified with *akrasia and incontinence*, is roughly to intentionally and freely act against the agent's better (or best) judgement that she has at the time of action.<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that the agent's evaluative judgement involved in the traditional account of weakness of will must be made from the agent's own perspective, not from another viewpoint. Further, this judgement must be an all-things-considered judgement. That is, the agent reaches it in the light of all considerations and reasons taken into account by her. Moreover, in order that the agent's intentional and free action done contrary to her all-things-considered judgement, on the traditional picture, counts as a case of weakness of will, it is necessary for the agent to be aware of her all-things-considered judgement at the time of action. In addition, it is also essential that the agent is conscious that her action is actually against her all-things-considered judgement;

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout the current chapter, I use "weakness of will", "akrasia" and "incontinence" interchangeably.

otherwise, her action would not, standardly speaking, be taken as a case of weakness of will<sup>8</sup> (Audi, 1990, pp. 270-271; Mele, 2012, pp. 4-8).<sup>9</sup>

To take an example, suppose the agent judges it to be better not to bother her friend, all-things-considered. If the agent intentionally and freely acts in a way such that her action bothers her friend while forgetting her all-things-considered judgement, her action won't standardly be a case of weakness of will. Similarly, if the agent intentionally and freely takes a certain action while she is not conscious that performing this action causes her friend to be bothered, her action won't count as a case of weakness of will, even though the agent is aware of her all-things-considered judgement at the time of the action.

One of the significant philosophers whose accounts of weakness of will are classified as the traditional one is Donald Davidson. His major work on weakness of will, "How is Weakness of the Will Possible?" (1970), has had great influence on the subsequent literature. This work is primarily aimed to solve the puzzle of weakness of will, the difficulty that leads some philosophers, for example Hare<sup>10</sup>, to deny the existence of genuine cases of weakness of will. As I will explain later, these cases seem problematic because they are apparently inconsistent with two principles stemming from the nature of intentional actions.

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<sup>8</sup> To point out the last two mentioned features of *akrasia*, Audi distinguishes between acting against one's better judgement and "acting merely *inconsistently* with it" (Audi, 1990, p. 271).

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that the outlined conditions for *akrasia* might be controversial.

<sup>10</sup> Hare's denial of the genuine cases of weakness of will stems from his view on the connection between evaluative judgements and motivation. He takes some fairly strong form of internalism implying that it is just impossible to judge it is better to perform a certain action without being sufficiently motivated to do the action. He interprets apparently weak-willed actions as cases in which the agent is not actually able to do the action that she takes to be superior. Alternatively, they may be cases where the agent does not sincerely believe the action that she judges to be superior is in fact so. For more detail, see Hare (1952; 1963) and Stroud (2009).

Given Davidson's prominence in this field, it is worth examining his view of weakness of will to get some background knowledge on the traditional account. Hence, my focus will be on Davidson's view in the rest of the current chapter. There is a tight connection between Davidson's account of weakness of will, his approach to the puzzle of weakness of will and his theory of intentional action. This means to better understand Davidson's account of weakness of will, we need first to know about the other two issues. Then, we will be in a good position to consider whether there might be any case where the agent intuitively exhibits weakness of will that cannot fit into the traditional account, or more precisely, Davidson's one.

The first section explains the puzzle of weakness of will, the difficulty persuading Davidson to account for weakness of will, and his solution to this problem. The second section provides an analysis of Davidson's theory of intentional action. Then, I will spell out Davidson's account of weakness of will in the third section. Having expounded Davidson's view, we will be in a good position to consider whether there might be any case intuitively seeming to be a case of weakness of will that Davidson's account fails to capture. That will be the topic of section 4. The results of the present chapter suggest Davidson's account of weakness of will, as a prominent traditional view, fails to accommodate some cases where the agent intuitively displays weakness of will.

### **Section 1. Davidson on the Puzzle of Weakness of Will**

Weakness of will, traditionally speaking, arises when the agent intentionally and freely does an action while judging it better to do some alternative open to

her.<sup>11</sup> These cases appear problematic since weak-willed actions are, on the one hand, taken as intentional actions; and on the other, the existence of these actions is apparently inconsistent with two principles stemming from the nature of intentional actions. As formulated by Davidson (1970, p. 23), those principles are as follows:

“P1. If an agent wants to do  $x$  more than he wants to do  $y$  and he believes himself free to do either  $x$  or  $y$ , then he will intentionally do  $x$  if he does either  $x$  or  $y$  intentionally.”

“P2. If an agent judges that it would be better to do  $x$  than to do  $y$ , then he wants to do  $x$  more than he wants to do  $y$ .”

When P1 and P2 are combined together, they imply the principle that “if an agent judges that it would be better to do  $x$  than to do  $y$  and he believes himself free to do either  $x$  or  $y$ , then he will intentionally do  $x$  if he does either  $x$  or  $y$  intentionally” (Davidson, 1970, p. 23); following Gosling (1990, p. 104), let us call it P4. This means that the agent’s intentional action, done freely, corresponds to her evaluative judgement in support of her action. However, it sounds as if this is inconsistent with the principle (P3) that “there are weak-willed actions” (Davidson, 1970, p. 23).

P4 and P3 appear inconsistent because P4 implies that when the agent has an evaluative judgement about the superiority of an action, she will act on this judgement, if she acts intentionally and freely at all. That is, she will perform

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<sup>11</sup> It is controversial whether the alternative action must in fact be available for the agent. For instance, Santas takes it that the alternative should be actually open to the agent, whereas it does not, for Davidson, need to be so. Rather, it is enough that the agent believes some options open to her (Davidson, 1970, p. 22; Santas, 1966, p. 3).

the action that she deems to be superior. By contrast, in cases of weakness of will, the agent acts contrary to her evaluative judgement in support of the superior action and does the alternative that she takes to be inferior despite acting intentionally and freely.

Given P4, the question is how it is possible that the agent intentionally and freely takes the action that she judges to be worse than the alternative. This is what is called the puzzle of weakness of will. It is clear that if one rejects at least one of P1, P2 or P3, (s)he won't be faced with this problem. Nonetheless, Davidson insists that the solution to this difficulty is not to be found by denying any of these principles. That is because he, on the one hand, believes that there are actions that genuinely meet the conditions of weakness of will; and on the other, he holds P1 and P2 result from the nature of intentional action (Davidson, 1970, p. 31). As a result, Davidson concerns himself with solving this puzzle in a way that denies neither the existence of weak-willed action nor P1 and P2. In what follows, I shall sketch Davidson's solution to the puzzle of weakness of will.

### **Davidson's Approach**

To account for weakness of will (or incontinence), Davidson offers the following description (Davidson, 1970, p. 22):

“In doing *x* an agent acts incontinently if and only if: (a) the agent does *x* intentionally; (b) the agent believes there is an alternative action *y* open to him; and (c) the agent judges that, all things considered, it would be better to do *y* than to do *x*.”

Then, he points out that the phrase “all things considered”, mentioned in the characterisation of weakness of will, but not in P4, is the key to solving the puzzle of weakness of will. To make it clear, Davidson draws a distinction between *conditional* and *unconditional*<sup>12</sup> evaluative judgements. Further, he distinguishes between two kinds of conditional evaluative judgement, namely, *prima facie* (in abbreviated form, *PF*) and *all-things-considered* (in abbreviated form, *ATC*) judgements. As will be clear throughout the discussion of Davidson’s view of weakness of will, conditional evaluative judgements are relational. That is, they are made in the light of some consideration(s) (or reason(s)) in favour of or against doing the action specified in the relevant judgement. In this category, *PF* judgements differ from *ATC* ones in terms of the expansion of considerations (or reasons) that agents take into account in reaching their conditional evaluative judgements. More specifically, *PF* judgements are, on Davidson’s picture, based on a reason (or a set of reasons), whereas *ATC* judgements refer to the conditional judgements agents make in light of their most comprehensive set of considerations (or reasons). Unlike conditional evaluative judgements, unconditional ones do not relativize the superiority or inferiority of an action to agents’ reasons (or considerations). Rather, they express it in a logically absolute form like “A is better than B” (Davidson, 1970, pp. 39-40; Lazar, 1999, p. 385).

Having made these distinctions between evaluative judgements, Davidson is in a position to clarify how genuine cases of weakness of will exist without violating what is required by the nature of intentional action. Very briefly,

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<sup>12</sup> The terms “*sans phrase*”, “*simpliciter*” and “*all-out*” judgements are sometimes used to refer to what Davidson has in mind by “*unconditional judgement*”. For example, see Davidson (1970); Gosling (1990); Kennett (2001) and Stroud (2009).

Davidson argues that the evaluative judgement on which the agent is required by the nature of intentional action to act, if she acts intentionally and freely at all, refers to what he calls an *unconditional* judgement. By contrast, weakness of will arises when the agent's intentional and free action corresponds to the unconditional judgement drawn from a *PF* judgement, but not from the agent's *ATC* judgement. In doing so, the agent does not, Davidson explains, act against her unconditional judgement in support of the action that she takes; rather, her action follows from her unconditional judgement, as is required by the nature of intentional action. Nevertheless, the agent violates the principle of continence in acting as she does, the principle commanding the agent, very roughly, to take the action corresponding to an unconditional judgement drawn from an *ATC* judgement. This interpretation, Davidson believes, not only eliminates the apparent inconsistency between the nature of intentional action and weakness of will but also makes room for genuine cases of weakness of will.

Surely, more explanation is needed to get clearer insight into Davidson's account of weakness of will. However, since his view of weakness of will is tightly connected with his theory of intentional action, we need as a preliminary to have a look at Davidson's view on intentional action. That will be the topic of the next section.

## **Section 2. Davidson on Intentional Action**

This section spells out Davidson's view on intentional action. The purpose of doing so is to serve as background to explaining Davidson's account of weakness of will. One might take it that the reason for analysing Davidson's

theory of intentional action might be the fact that weakness of will is commonly considered to be a case of intentional action. That can be true; but more importantly, Davidson's explanation of weakness of will is such that we will need as a preliminary to know about his account of intentional action if we wish to fully understand his view on weakness of will.

Initially, Davidson offers his view on the nature of intentional action in "Actions, Reasons and Causes" (1963). In that paper, he accounts for intentional action in terms of a deductive model.<sup>13</sup> However, when he later comes to explain the possibility of weakness of will, he abandons the deductive model. He does so because this model is ineffective in solving the puzzle of weakness of will in a way that also makes room for genuine cases of weakness of will.<sup>14</sup> Then, there is a shift in Davidson's view on intentional action. Since my primary aim of the discussion of Davidson's theory of intentional action is to shed light on his account of weakness of will, in explaining Davidson's theory of intentional action I refer to his later account. That is because Davidson, as previously mentioned, abandons his earlier view in order to be able to make sense of genuine cases of weakness of will and gives his later

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<sup>13</sup> On the deductive model, the agent's primary reason (the reason for which she acts as she does) leads the agent to deductively reach an unconditional judgement to which the agent's intentional action corresponds.

<sup>14</sup> On the deductive model, there is a causal relation between the agent's primary reason and intentional action. That is, the agent's primary reason is the cause of her intentional action. Further, the elements of a given primary reason, on Davidson's earlier picture, deductively yield an unconditional judgement from which the agent's intentional action follows. Given the causal relation between the agent's primary reason and intentional action, it means the agent's strongest reason is naturally the strongest cause (Davidson, 2001, p. xvi). This implies that the agent's intentional action corresponds to the judgement deductively yielded by the agent's strongest reason. However, the alleged weak-willed action does not follow from the judgement made in the light of the agent's strongest reason, although weak-willed action is, by definition, an intentional action. Having faced this serious challenge, Davidson abandons the deductive model in order to be able to explain how genuine cases of weakness of will arise. Although he changes his idea of the deductive model, he emphasises the causally strongest reason does not necessarily need to be the reason providing the agent with the strongest grounds for acting (Davidson, 2001, p. xvi).

account of intentional action to explain how weakness of will is possible. Nonetheless, since some readers might be interested in knowing about Davidson's earlier view on intentional action, I will briefly mention some aspects of his earlier view in a footnote wherever there is a shift in Davidson's view.

An intentional action is, for Davidson, an action done for a reason,<sup>15</sup> where this reason is taken to be the combination of the agent's pro-attitude<sup>16</sup> and belief.<sup>17</sup> This means that when the agent has a reason for doing a certain action, she has some pro-attitude towards a specific object and believes that doing this action promotes or at least stands a chance of promoting what she has the pro-attitude towards. On this view, the agent's reason for doing a certain action can explain why she acts as she does, thereby rationalising her action. Davidson calls this reason a *primary reason* (Davidson, 1963, pp. 685-686).

To take an example, assume I want to be cool and believe that opening the window is a sort of action which promotes getting cool, given that the wind blows into the room. In the light of this pro-attitude/belief pair, I then open the window. That is, this pro-attitude/belief pair constitutes my primary reason, the reason for which I act as I do. In this case, my action of opening the window is, on Davidson's picture, intentional "*under the description of*" getting cool. That

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<sup>15</sup> There has been much debate on what it is to act intentionally in the literature. For some discussion, see Mele (1992a).

<sup>16</sup> What Davidson means by "pro-attitude" includes not only desires, wants and urges but also moral and aesthetic principles, goals, values, conventions and prejudices (Davidson, 1963, p. 686).

<sup>17</sup> In this context, Davidson takes "belief" so broadly that it refers to holding, knowing, realising, observing, noticing and so on (Davidson, 1963, p. 685).

is because my pro-attitude towards getting cool along with the relevant belief gives me the reason for which I open the window (Davidson, 1963, p. 687).<sup>18</sup>

When the agent has a reason for doing a certain action, the elements of this reason, according to Davidson, provide the agent with grounds for constituting a practical syllogism, the syllogism that yields a conditional judgement on the desirability (or goodness) of the corresponding action, in some respect(s).<sup>19</sup>

It is worth noting that this conditional judgement does not necessarily need to be about the desirability of the proposed action. Rather, what is crucial, in Davidson's view, is that it entails some "positive attribute" of the corresponding action. That is because the agent, on this view, does the action due to taking it to have some positive feature; for example, it is good or desirable. Thus, the term "desirable" can be replaced with other positive words such as "good", "worthy" and so on, the positive words indicating the agent's positive attitude towards the proposed action (Davidson, 1978, pp. 85-87). For simplicity, I take desirability as the positive attribute in what follows.

To see how a conditional judgement about the desirability of an action, for which the agent has a reason, follows, the premises of the practical syllogism are given by the components of the agent's reason for doing the action. The element of pro-attitude offers the major premise; and the relevant belief gives

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<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting that an action might, on Davidson's theory, be intentional under a certain description, but unintentional under other one(s). Looking back on the example of opening the window, if this action also brings about the papers on my desk being dispersed, my action of opening the window is intentional only under the description of getting cool, but not dispersing the papers. This implies that what determines the description under which an action is intentional is the agent's primary reason, the reason for which she acts as she does (Ferrero, 2013, p. 76).

<sup>19</sup> There is a shift in Davidson's view about the conclusion of the practical syllogism. In contrast to Davidson's later account, the practical syllogism, on his earlier view, deductively yields an unconditional judgement on the desirability (or goodness) of the corresponding action.

the minor premise. Consider a case where Louise is so tired that she wants to take a rest and believes that by lying down, she can have a rest. The minor premise given by her belief might be something like “lying down results in taking a rest”.

To reach the conclusion on the desirability of the corresponding action, Davidson holds that the major premise of the practical syllogism should involve the agent’s “attitude of approval” towards the object of the relevant pro-attitude. However, it is not, according to Davidson, plausible to express the agent’s pro-attitude as the major premise, for example, “Louise wants to take a rest”. That is because the aim here is not to simply express the agent’s pro-attitude, but to provide the proposition of her pro-attitude in a way that its content entails the agent’s evaluative “attitude of approval” (Davidson, 1978, p. 86).

Looking back on the Louise example, the major premise involving her evaluative attitude of approval can be in this form: “it is desirable to take a rest”. This major premise along with the minor premise, given by the relevant belief that “lying down results in taking a rest”, yields some proposition like the following one as the conclusion of practical syllogism: “lying down is desirable *in so far as* it results in taking a rest” (Davidson, 1985, p. 196).

This conclusion is a conditional judgement on the desirability of the corresponding action. That is because the action is desirable only in the light of Louise’s desire to take a rest. Although it is desirable because of promoting what Louise has a pro-attitude towards, it might in addition have some undesirable characteristic(s). For instance, Louise might simultaneously feel an

obligation to help her old mother who is washing the dishes and believe that washing the dishes would help her. Then, “lying down” is undesirable in the light of Louise’s recent pro-attitude/belief pair, namely, feeling an obligation to help her old mother along with the relevant belief.

It is worth noting that although the agent’s reason for doing a certain action provides grounds for reaching a conditional judgement about the desirability of the action in a certain respect, this conditional judgement is not, on Davidson’s later view, the judgement that is associated with the agent’s intentional action. That is because the agent’s conditional judgement is not “an all-out conclusion in favour of” the corresponding action (Stroud, 2009, Sec. 2). Rather, it implies that the corresponding action is desirable *in so far as* it promotes what the agent has a pro-attitude towards, while this action might have some undesirable characteristic(s) in some other respect(s). Insofar as the conclusion of practical reasoning would be conditional, the agent might not be encouraged to perform the action since the conditional judgement does not imply that the action is conclusively desirable. In order that the agent comes to take the action, her conclusion of practical reasoning should, on Davidson’s view, be conclusive so that when the agent reaches it, no more reasoning is, rationally speaking, required; rather, the agent goes ahead and acts on it. Thus, the agent would do the action when she conclusively draws the conclusion that the desirable feature(s) of the action is (are) enough to act on. Davidson calls this judgement an *unconditional* one. The propositional form of the unconditional judgement is something like: “the corresponding action is desirable” (Davidson, 1978, p. 98). To reach an unconditional judgement, the agent, Davidson states, has to move further and draw an unconditional judgement from her conditional one.

Thus, when the agent performs an intentional action, her action manifests a transition from a conditional judgement to an unconditional one.

At this point, it is worth calling attention to an issue. We have considered that the agent's intentional action, for Davidson, is associated with an unconditional judgement in support of the action. I take it that this idea is, at least within Davidson's framework, at stake in the nature of intentional action. That is, the agent's intentional action always follows from her unconditional judgement; otherwise it would not, from Davidson's perspective, be an intentional action. If that is right, it is, in my view, the reason why Davidson insists that P1 and P2 stem from the nature of intentional action. When they are taken together, it follows that the agent's intentional action corresponds to her judgement in support of this action. This judgement is what Davidson labels an unconditional one (Davidson, 1970, p. 39).

The unconditional judgement to which the agent's intentional action corresponds is, on Davidson's later view, identified with the agent's intention.<sup>20</sup> That is, when the agent has an intention to do a certain action, her intention implies that she has reached an unconditional judgement about the desirability of doing this action (Davidson, 1978, pp. 97-101).

Davidson's idea about the identification of an unconditional judgement with an intention might raise some question(s) about the plausibility of this view.<sup>21</sup> Further, there has been widespread debate over Davidson's theory of

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<sup>20</sup> On Davidson's earlier view, the agent's intention with which she performs an action is reducible to her relevant pro-attitude/belief pair. However, Davidson later changes his idea. He, on his later picture, identifies the agent's intention with an unconditional judgement.

<sup>21</sup> For discussion, see Bratman (1985) and Davidson (1985).

intentional action, *inter alia*.<sup>22</sup> For instance, David Charles (1982, p. 204) argues for cases where the agent's intentional action follows from her conditional judgement, but not an unconditional one. That is, having reached a conditional judgement in support of a certain action, the agent may act on this judgement without making any corresponding unconditional judgement.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, Bratman (1979, pp. 156-157) argues that it is not the case that the agent's intentional action always corresponds to her unconditional judgement. Rather, there might be cases in which the agent reaches an unconditional judgement; however, she intentionally and freely acts contrary to her unconditional judgement. Similarly, while raising an objection to the *ATC* judgement, Grice and Baker (1985, p. 201) argue that it is not plausible that the agent fails to derive an unconditional judgement from an *ATC* one. Rather, it is more plausible to say that the agent reaches an unconditional judgement, and then fails to act according to it.<sup>24</sup>

Given disagreements over Davidson's idea that intentional actions are always associated with an unconditional judgement in support of the corresponding action, as well as his identification of this unconditional judgement with an intention, further discussion about the nature of intentional action remains to be done. However, it is beyond the scope of the present work to argue for or against one side or the other and to try to settle these remaining issues. Instead, I grant, for the sake of argument, that not only is the agent's intention to do an action identical with her unconditional judgement, but also

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<sup>22</sup> For example, see Grice and Baker (1985), Margolis (1981) and Peacocke (1985).

<sup>23</sup> For more details see: Charles (1982) and Kennett (2001).

<sup>24</sup> For more details see: Grice and Baker (1985) and Davidson (1985).

that her intentional action is associated with her unconditional judgement—reaching which requires a transition from a conditional judgement to an unconditional one.

Nonetheless, it seems the question how weakness of will occurs is still open. Given that a weak-willed (or incontinent) action is, by hypothesis, an intentional one, it means the agent's weak-willed action corresponds to her unconditional judgement derived from a conditional one. That is, she acts on her unconditional judgement on the desirability of the weak-willed action. If that is the case, the question is why this action is taken as incontinent. In other words, the question remains how weakness of will is possible after all, given that all intentional actions, according to Davidson, are performed in accordance with the agent's unconditional judgement in support of the corresponding action.

In brief, the transition from a conditional judgement to an unconditional one provides Davidson with grounds for explaining how incontinence occurs. As previously mentioned, Davidson distinguishes between two kinds of conditional evaluative judgements: *prima facie* (*PF*) and *all-things-considered* (*ATC*) judgements. Incontinence arises when the agent's intentional action corresponds to the unconditional judgement drawn from a *PF* judgement, but not from the agent's *ATC* one. By contrast, once the agent acts on the unconditional judgement derived from her *ATC* judgement, her action would not, on Davidson's picture, be a case of incontinence. In the next section, I shall explain Davidson's account of weakness of will in more detail.

### Section 3. Davidson on Weakness of Will

It appears from Davidson's definition of weakness of will, earlier quoted, that weakness of will, for Davidson, arises when the agent intentionally and freely performs an action ( $x$ ), while judging, all-things-considered, it would be better to do an alternative ( $y$ ) that she takes to be open to her. This implies that in cases of weakness of will, the agent is faced with at least two courses of action, on taking one of which she should settle. To decide which one to perform, she may either explicitly or implicitly engage in practical reasoning, where she weighs her competing reasons for doing each action. When the agent engages in practical reasoning in order to figure out what to do, she, on Davidson's picture, needs to end up reaching an unconditional judgement on the desirability of an action, if she acts intentionally and freely at all.

To clarify how the agent will reach this unconditional judgement, the agent's reasons for doing actions open to her are, on Davidson's view, inputs of practical reasoning, data providing grounds for beginning practical reasoning (Davidson, 1970, p. 31). They make it possible for the agent to constitute, as previously outlined, the practical syllogism, thereby reaching some conditional evaluative judgements in support of the corresponding actions. When the agent considers at least two competing actions, for doing each of which she has some reason, the agent might judge in the light of  $r$  (as a reason), it would be better to do  $x$  rather than  $y$ . However, in the light of  $e$  (another reason), it would be better to do  $y$  rather than  $x$ . These judgements are conditional due to being relativized to some consideration. That is, they present the superiority of one action to other only in the light of the relevant reason. This kind of conditional judgement is what Davidson calls *prima facie* (*PF*)

judgement. The logical form of a *PF* judgement is this: *PF* (x is better than y, r) (Davidson, 1970, p. 39).

To illustrate the process of reaching *PF* judgements, consider once again the Louise case. Assume she wants to settle what to do: whether to lie down or wash the dishes. She, on the one hand, wants to take a rest. In the light of this pro-attitude along with the relevant belief, she judges it to be better to lie down rather than wash the dishes. On the other hand, she feels an obligation to help her old mother and believes that she can do so by washing the dishes. In the light of this reason, she may judge it to be better to wash the dishes rather than lie down. These judgements are conditional since they are about the superiority of the corresponding action over the alternative in the light of the relevant reason. That is, in each case, the corresponding action is judged to be better *in so far as* it promotes what the agent has pro-attitude towards. These conditional judgements made in one respect (or in the light of one reason) are, in Davidson's terminology, *prima facie* (*PF*) judgements.

Since each *PF* judgement expresses the relativized superiority of the corresponding action in one respect, each course of action might be worse than its alternative(s) in other respect(s). The agent might simultaneously have some reasons for and against each option, thereby reaching some *PF* judgements for and against each action. Then, she, on Davidson's picture, needs to reach an overall judgement, the judgement that Davidson labels an *all-things-considered* (*ATC*) one.

An *ATC* judgement is not made in the light of just one reason, but all reasons considered by the agent. That is, to reach this judgement, the agent

takes account of further reasons (or considerations) available for her and regarded as relevant by her. Then, an *ATC* judgement is the judgement made in the light of the most comprehensive set of reasons (or considerations) which the agent takes into account at the time of judgement. Nonetheless, an *ATC* judgement is still conditional despite being made on the basis of the most comprehensive set of reasons (or considerations). That is because it relativizes the superiority of one action over the alternative(s) to some considerations, no matter how wide the range of these considerations is (Davidson, 1970, p. 39; Davidson, 1985, p. 201; Lazar, 1999, p. 385).

To exemplify making an *ATC* judgement, let us look back on the Louise case. We have considered that Louise has reached two *PF* judgements; one is in support of lying down and the other is in favour of washing the dishes. These *PF* judgements imply that each action is better (or more desirable) than the alternative in some respect. Nonetheless, each action might have some undesirable characteristic(s) in other respect(s). Louise hence requires taking further considerations into account. For example, she might consider that helping her old mother not only makes her mother happy but also causes Louise to be satisfied with her action. By contrast, she will feel guilty if she lies down while her old mother is washing the dishes. Louise might then reach the judgement that it is better to wash the dishes in the light of further considerations. This judgement is an *ATC* one.

Although the agent might reach an *ATC* judgement in the process of her practical reasoning, this judgement is not, on Davidson's view, the judgement with which the agent's intentional action is associated. That is because an *ATC* judgement is conditional, whereas the agent's intentional action is, on

Davidson's picture, required to correspond to an unconditional judgement. To act intentionally, the agent then needs to go further and make an unconditional judgement in support of the action under consideration (Davidson, 1970, p. 39).

As a rational guidance for the agent on how to make a transition from a conditional judgement to an unconditional one, Davidson introduces the principle of continence. As sketched by Davidson, the principle of continence instructs that the agent to "perform the action judged best on the basis of all available relevant reasons" (Davidson, 1970, p. 41).

At this point, some clarification needs to be provided. The question has, I suppose, been how to make the transition between conditional and unconditional judgements. In response, it has been stated that the principle of continence, rationally speaking, governs the transition. That is, the rational agent should comply with this principle in order to make an unconditional judgement. However, the principle, as formulated by Davidson, commands the agent to act on her *ATC* judgement. Then, it sounds as if the principle concerns the rational relation (or transition, if you like) between conditional judgement and action, but not between conditional and unconditional judgements. In other words, the principle of continence does not apparently instruct how to draw an unconditional judgement when the agent has some conditional ones, but which action to take. Then, it raises an apparent challenge, the challenge that it sounds as if the form of the given answer does not match the form of the question under consideration.

To deal with this apparent challenge, I call attention to Davidson's view on the nature of intentional action. More specifically, Davidson holds that the agent's intentional action corresponds to her unconditional judgement in support of this action. If that is the case, it follows that when the agent takes some intentional action, she has reached an unconditional judgement in favour of the action; and then, she acts as she does on this unconditional judgement.

The implication of Davidson's view on the nature of intentional action for the challenge under consideration is the following. When the agent complies with the principle of continence and intentionally acts on her *ATC* judgement in support of the action that she takes, her intentional action implies she has made an unconditional judgement in support of the action, the unconditional judgement to which her intentional action, according to Davidson, corresponds. This implies that she derives her unconditional judgement from her *ATC* judgement since her intentional action is, by hypothesis, in accordance with her *ATC* judgement.

When the principle of continence asks the agent to act on her *ATC* judgement, this means that the principle commands the agent to draw her unconditional judgement from the conditional *ATC* judgement. That is because the agent's intentional action, on Davidson's later view, corresponds to the unconditional judgement derived from a conditional judgement in the support of the action that she does. Once the agent succeeds in conforming to the principle of continence, she acts continently. By contrast, incontinence arises when the agent fails to comply with this principle and derives her unconditional judgement from one of her conditional *PF* judgements, but not from her *ATC* judgement.

If that is the case, it by no means follows that the incontinent agent acts against her unconditional judgement. Rather, since the incontinent agent, by definition, acts intentionally, her action corresponds to the unconditional judgement in support of this action, as it is, within Davidson's framework, required by the nature of intentional action. Nevertheless, the unconditional judgement associated with her action is derived from one of her conditional *PF* judgements, not her conditional *ATC* judgement as the principle of continence requires. As a result, she violates this principle, thereby acting incontinently.

It is worth noting that the principle of continence is a requirement of neither logic nor intentional action. It does not then result in contradiction when the agent fails to comply with this principle. It is quite possible that the agent's action follows from an unconditional judgement derived from a conditional *PF* judgement rather than a conditional *ATC* one. Nonetheless, it does not imply that she violates the requirement of intentional action, as P1 and P2 together requires.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, there is no inconsistency between P1 and P2 together and the existence of genuine cases of weakness of will (or incontinence).

Having expounded Davidson's view of weakness of will, I shall consider whether there might be any case where the agent intuitively seems to show weakness of will in acting as she does that cannot be captured by Davidson's account. This will be the topic of the next section.

#### **Section 4. Cases of Weakness of Will**

This section considers whether Davidson's account of weakness of will can capture some common cases where the agent intuitively seems to display

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<sup>25</sup> Taking P1 and P2 together implies that the agent's intentional action follows from the judgement in support of the action, the judgement that Davidson calls an unconditional one.

weakness of will. To this end, I will sketch two cases. Although both have the same basic structure, my aim in offering two examples is to show that this structure is not limited to only one case; rather, cases having this structure may be common in our day-to-day lives.

### **I. A Smoker Case**

Consider a smoker who wants to be healthy and believes that he can be so by giving up smoking. He also anticipates the possibility of the temptation to smoke because of his desire for a cigarette. Nonetheless, in the light of his pro-attitude towards being healthy and the relevant belief, he makes a conditional judgement that quitting smoking is better than smoking insofar as it stands a chance of promoting this pro-attitude. He then intends to give up smoking. That is, he derives an unconditional judgement about the goodness of quitting smoking from this conditional judgement, in Davidson's terminology.<sup>26</sup>

However, the smoker later faces the temptation to have a cigarette. At this time, with respect to his desire for smoking along with his belief that having a cigarette promotes his desire, he makes a conditional judgement in support of smoking. To put it into Davidson's words, the smoker judges that smoking is better than refraining from smoking in so far as it satisfies his desire for smoking. On the other hand, since he still wishes to be healthy, in the light of this pro-attitude and the relevant belief, he once more makes a conditional judgement that quitting smoking is better than smoking in so far as it stands a chance of being healthy. Having reached these two conditional judgements, the smoker comes to decide what to do without making any conditional judgement

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<sup>26</sup> As previously mentioned, an unconditional judgement is, on Davidson's later view, identical with an intention.

more comprehensive than these two judgements he has reached. He then intentionally and freely proceeds to smoke. This, within Davidson's framework, implies that he derives an unconditional judgement from his conditional judgement in support of smoking.

In this case, when the smoker intends to quit smoking in the first place, he, as earlier mentioned, anticipates that he may later feel a desire for a cigarette, thereby being tempted to smoke. Thus, when his desire to smoke comes up, this desire is not a new thing of which he was not aware at the time of intending to give up smoking. Nonetheless, he abandons his prior intention on account of being tempted to smoke, the temptation that he anticipated at the time of intending to quit smoking. If that is the case, we are intuitively inclined to attribute weakness of will to the smoker when he abandons his prior intention just because of the temptation to smoke, all other things being equal.<sup>27</sup>

If our intuition is on the right track, it is then difficult to see how Davidson's account of weakness of will could make sense of this case. That is because weakness of will, for Davidson, arises when the agent acts against (or fails to derive an unconditional judgement from) her *ATC* judgement that she has at the time of action. However, in the smoker case, none of his conditional judgements that he has at the time of smoking is more comprehensive than the other. Rather, each is made in the light of the equal expansion of considerations. Thus, it is not the case that one of these judgements is an *ATC* judgement, and the other is not. Then, insofar as Davidson's account goes, the smoker is not subject to the failure to draw an unconditional judgement from

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<sup>27</sup> A parallel case to that of the smoker is given by Holton (2009, Ch. 4).

an *ATC* judgement he has at the time of action. Thus, it is not clear how Davidson can make sense of this case as a case of weakness of will.

The failure of Davidson's account of weakness of will is not limited to the smoker case. Rather, there are numerous cases having the same structure of the smoker one in our day-to-day lives. The following is a further example.

## **II. A Dieter Case**

Assume an obese agent wishes to lose weight and believes that going on a diet stands a chance of promoting this pro-attitude while being aware of the possibility of the temptation to have fatty food or pudding. In the light of her pro-attitude towards losing weight and the relevant belief, she reaches a conditional judgement that going on a diet is better than abstaining from being on a diet insofar as it stands a chance of promoting her losing weight. Then, she intends to go on a diet.<sup>28</sup> However, she is later faced with fatty food. This in turn triggers a desire to eat this food. That is to say, she comes to have a pro-attitude towards this food. In addition, she believes that eating this food satisfies her desire. Further, suppose the agent has still maintained her previous pro-attitude/belief pair on the basis of which she intends to be on a diet. Then, at the time of having a desire to eat fatty food, she has two conflicting pro-attitude/belief pairs. In the light of them, she reaches two conflicting conditional judgements. On the one hand, she judges it to be better to be on a diet than to eat fatty food insofar as it would help her to lose weight. On the other hand, she believes it is better to eat fatty food than being on a diet insofar as it satisfies her desire for fatty food. Having made these two judgements, she

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<sup>28</sup> I am assuming that the agent forms the intention to be on a diet without making any conditional judgement more comprehensive than she has reached in the light of her pro-attitude towards losing weight and the corresponding belief.

then proceeds to have fatty food without making any conditional judgement more comprehensive than these ones. This, within Davidson's framework, means she derives an unconditional judgement from her conditional one in support of eating fatty food.

In this case, the agent intuitively manifests weakness of will in dropping her prior intention and proceeding to eat fatty food. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how this case can fit into Davidson's account. That is because neither of the agent's judgements that she has at the time of action is more comprehensive than the other. Then, it is not the case that one of these judgements is an *ATC* judgement, and the other is not. Thus, the agent does not violate the principle of continence in acting as she does.

It is worth emphasising that, so far as my view goes, I do not deny that cases where the agent acts against her *ATC* judgement might be cases of weakness of will.<sup>29</sup> Rather, the point I am trying to make is that Davidson's account of weakness of will, in my view, fails to make sense of some cases where the agent intuitively shows weakness of will although she does not violate the principle of continence in acting as she does.

### **III. Davidson's Reaction**

In reply to the smoker and dieter cases, Davidson might admit that they cannot fit into his account of weakness of will. Nevertheless, he might claim that they are not cases of weakness of will. Although there is something wrong with the

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<sup>29</sup> Weakness of will, on Davidson's picture, arises when the agent derives an unconditional judgement from one of her *PF* judgements, but not her *ATC* one. Since the agent's intentional action is, on Davidson's view, associated with an unconditional judgement, it follows that weakness of will is, for Davidson, to act contrary to the agent's *ATC* judgement.

agents in the given examples, they, Davidson might claim, show some different kind(s) of fault, but not weakness of will.

Given Davidson's reaction, we face an interesting and hard question about how we should decide between the different ways of categorising phenomena. This question is a matter of methodology; and the answer to it might rest on our view about the purpose of the philosophical theories. Surely, it is a controversial issue. Focusing on the philosophical theories of weakness of will, some people might hold that the purpose of these theories is to elaborate in a more coherent way what common sense thinks about weakness of will. Others might have a different approach and hold that the philosophical theories of weakness of will should serve some other purpose(s).

I do not here wish to pursue the question what the correct purpose of the philosophical theories of weakness of will is. Instead, I just rely on my methodological assumption that the purpose of the philosophical theory of weakness of will is to elaborate what common sense takes to be weakness of will. Given the stipulated purpose, my methodology would be to track our intuitions about cases of weakness of will and then account for weakness of will in a way that succeeds in making sense of cases intuitively seeming to be cases of weakness of will.

Given my methodological assumption, even if Davidson comes to take these cases to be a different kind of defect, but not weakness of will, it won't undermine the idea that Davidson's account fails to accommodate some cases in which the agent intuitively seems to exhibit weakness of will although she does not act against her *ATC* judgement. That is because we are working on the

basis of the methodological assumption that the philosophical theory of weakness of will should capture cases where common sense attributes weakness of will to the agent in acting as she does.

#### **IV. Answering some Questions**

One might wonder whether, in those two examples, we would attribute weakness of will to the agents if they did not form their prior intentions.<sup>30</sup> In response, the agents would not intuitively seem to display weakness of will if they did not form their prior intentions. This answer raises the question of why the agents' prior intentions make a difference in our judgements about whether those cases are cases of weakness of will. To answer this question, my proposal for weakness of will is promising.

As I understand weakness of will, it arises when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough (or sufficiently weighty) normative reason. As I will explain at greater length later (in chapter 4), one of the practical commitments is, following Mele (2012, p. 16), executive commitment, a commitment made owing to the agent's intention. In the smoker and dieter cases, the agents are subject to executive commitment, given their prior intentions. In these cases, when the agents' desires, conflicting with the intended options, come up, they drop their prior intentions just because of their corresponding desires, all other things being equal. In these circumstances, I take it that their desires do not provide them with sufficiently weighty normative reasons to justify their actions. As a result, we are inclined to attribute weakness of will to those agents since they, on my

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<sup>30</sup> In the first case, the smoker intends to give up smoking; however, he later abandons this intention and smokes. In the second case, the agent intends to be on a diet; nonetheless, she later skips her diet.

picture, abandon their practical commitments without sufficiently weighty normative reasons.

Of course, this proposal might provoke a further question of why the agents' reasons for which they act as they do are not sufficiently weighty. However, I do not wish to discuss this issue here. Rather, my main concern is to show that my account has the advantages of making sense of our intuitions about the smoker and dieter cases and answering the question of why their prior intentions make a difference in our attribution of weakness of will to them.

With respect to this question and our intuitive judgements that, in these two cases, the agents exhibit weakness of will, Holton's view of weakness of will is also promising. According to Holton, weakness of will is, roughly, to over-readily revise an intention. Where by "over-ready revision of intention", he means to revise an intention when it is not reasonable for the agent to do so. He may then state that the smoker and the dieter manifest weakness of will since they revise their prior intentions while it is not reasonable for them to do so. That is because their revisions result from the temptation that they anticipated at the time of forming their prior intentions, all other things being equal (Holton, 2009, pp. 73-78).

To answer the question of why their prior intentions play a crucial role in whether these cases are cases of weakness of will, Holton may provide the following explanation. When the agent intends to perform an action, she in some sense makes a commitment to do this action. This in turn enables the agent to coordinate her activities intra-personally as well as inter-personally. However, to play this role, intentions should be relatively stable. That is, they

should not be revised over-readily (Holton, 2009, pp. 2-4). Given the stability feature of intentions, that is why the smoker and dieter's prior intentions make a difference in whether they, in Holton's view, show weakness of will in acting as they do. In the next chapter, I will explain Holton's view in more detail.

## **V. Summary**

For a generalisation, I have offered two cases intuitively seeming to be cases of weakness of will. The basic structure of those examples is almost the same. That is, the agents intend to take a certain action (or make an unconditional judgement in support of a certain action, in Davidson's terminology). However, they later abandon their prior intentions and proceed to do the opposite course of action because their inclinations lead them to do so. In these cases, the agents intuitively seem to exhibit weakness of will; however, Davidson's account fails to accommodate them. That is because the agents do not violate the principle of continence in acting as they do. In response, Davidson may claim that they are not cases of weakness of will. To tackle this reaction, I have referred to my methodological assumption. Finally, in answer to some possible questions, Holton's view as well as my proposal for weakness of will have in reverse order appeared promising for making sense of the two cases offered in section 4.

## **Section 5. Conclusion**

The present chapter has set out to provide us with some background on the traditional view about weakness of will. The main aim of doing so has been to consider whether there is any case intuitively seeming to be a case of weakness of will that the traditional account fails to capture. Davidson's view on

weakness of will, as a traditional view, has been expounded. I have focused on Davidson's view since his account of weakness of will has had significant influence on the literature on weakness of will. The first section has explained the puzzle of weakness of will and Davidson's solution to it, the paradox motivating him to account for weakness of will. Then, I have spelled out his theory of intentional action in the second section. I have done so in these two sections because there is a tight connection between Davidson's account of weakness of will, his approach to the puzzle of weakness of will and his theory of intentional action. In the third section, I have analysed Davidson's account of weakness of will. Finally, I have offered some cases where the agent intuitively manifests weakness of will, but which Davidson's account of weakness of will fails to capture.

The findings of this chapter suggest that Davidson's account of weakness of will, as a prominent traditional view, fails to make sense of some cases intuitively seeming to be cases of weakness of will in which the agent does not violate the principle of continence.

### **Chapter 3. Weakness of Will in Terms of Acting against One's Prior Intention**

In the previous chapter, I have expounded Davidson's view of weakness of will, as a prominent instance of the traditional account. On this picture, the agent shows weakness of will when she acts against the all-things-considered judgement that she has at the time of action. Further, I have offered two cases, the smoker and dieter ones, where the agents intend to act in a certain way. Nonetheless, they are later tempted to take the opposite course of action. They then abandon their prior intentions and proceed to do the tempted option as a result of succumbing to contrary inclinations, all other things being equal. In these cases, the agents intuitively seem to exhibit weakness of will when temptation leads them to drop their prior intentions and take the alternative.

If our intuition is on the right track, it is, I have asserted, difficult to see how Davidson's account can make sense of these cases as cases of weakness of will. That is because neither of the judgements that the agents have at the time of action is, as described in the previous chapter, more comprehensive than the other. Rather, they have been made in the light of the equal expansion of considerations. This implies that it is not the case that one of those judgements is an all-things-considered judgement, and the other is not. Thus, when the agents take the tempted options, their actions are not against their all-things-considered judgements. This means they do not violate the principle of continence in acting as they do, thereby not displaying weakness of will, as Davidson understands it.

To make sense of these cases as cases of weakness of will, Holton's view (2009) seems promising. On his view, weakness of will is, roughly, to revise an intention while it is not reasonable to do so (2009, p. 70). Then, Holton may provide the following explanation as to why the smoker and dieter cases are cases of weakness of will. In these cases, the agents revise their prior intentions while it is not reasonable for them to do so. That is because their revisions result from the temptation that their intentions are aimed to overcome.

If that is the case that Holton's view can handle these cases better than the traditional account, we may take an interest in his view. Further, not only has his account attracted great attention but also resulted in widespread debate in the literature. As a result, this chapter aims to examine his view of weakness of will as a prominent one challenging the traditional account. It is worth highlighting that what I have in mind by "Holton's view (or account)" refers to the view of Holton introduced in *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* (Holton, 2009), unless otherwise indicated.<sup>31</sup>

The first section spells out his account of weakness of will. Then, I will raise two issues concerning some of Holton's ideas. The first one relates to his claim that the strategy that the agent needs in order to avoid weakness of will is to abstain from over-ready reconsideration. I will show the possibility of cases where the agent manifests weakness of will although she does not engage in over-ready reconsideration. The second difficulty has to do with the principles Holton offers to account for the rationality of tendencies of (non-)reconsideration. I will demonstrate that these principles are such that they may

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<sup>31</sup> Holton later modifies his view of weakness of will offered in *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* (2009), in the light of some empirical work done by May and Holton (2012). I will briefly mention the results of this study in chapter 4.

sometimes put the agent in a situation in which she would be accused of irrationality whatever she does. Finally, I will bring up Mele's idea of weakness of will (2012). The motivation for doing so is twofold. First, his view provides a response to Holton's account although Mele originally develops this idea in *Irrationality* (1987, p. 7) independently of Holton's view (2009). Second, it supports my idea that the agent may display weakness of will in both kinds of case, namely, cases of judgement-violation and cases of intention-violation. Since Mele's proposal for understanding the notion of weakness of will seems promising to me, his idea will be the line of thought that I will develop in order to give my positive account of weakness of will in the next part.

### **Section 1. Holton on Weakness of Will**

In his book, *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* (2009), Holton claims that the notion of "weakness of will", roughly, refers to cases where the agent fails to act on her intention,<sup>32</sup> but not cases where she freely and intentionally acts contrary to her all-things-considered judgement. Of course, this does not mean that Holton denies akrasia as acting freely and intentionally against the agent's all-things-considered judgement. Rather, he does not endorse the identification of akrasia with weakness of will. Nor does he view akrasia as one sort of case of weakness of will, among other cases—for example, cases of intention-violation. Akrasia and weakness of will are, for Holton, two different notions referring to two distinctive phenomena.

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<sup>32</sup> Holton views intention as a "self-standing" mental state irreducible to desire and belief. For more discussion, see Holton (2009, Ch. 1).

While insisting on conceiving weakness of will as a failure to fulfil an intention, Holton does not take it that whenever the agent fails to act on her intention, she would manifest weakness of will. That is because the agent might, for instance, form an intention based on wrong information; or, she might come to an intention as a result of faulty reasoning. Having realised that her intention is based on incorrect information or defective reasoning, the agent may revise her intention. In this case, although the agent fails to act on her prior intention, we are most unlikely to be inclined to attribute weakness of will to her, perhaps because it seems reasonable for her to act as she does. If that is right, not every case of failing to act on an intention would, Holton believes, be a case of weakness of will. Rather, the agent manifests weakness of will once she “too readily” revises a specific kind of intention Holton calls “resolution”. By “too-ready revision of a resolution”, Holton means that it is not reasonable for the agent to revise it (Holton, 2009, pp. 70-77).

Characterising weakness of will as “over-ready<sup>33</sup> revision of resolutions” raises at least two questions. First, what a resolution is. Second, when it is reasonable to revise a resolution and when it is not. I shall answer these two questions in turn.

### **I. Resolution**

A resolution is, for Holton, a specific kind of intention aimed to resist contrary inclinations. By “contrary inclinations”, Holton means desires, beliefs and other states such as fear, lethargy, anxiety and so on that are suspected to deflect the agent from doing what she intends (or resolves) to do. On this

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<sup>33</sup> The term “over-ready” and “too-ready” are used interchangeably.

picture, a resolution is a combination of two intentions, a first-order intention and a second-order one. The first-order intention is an intention to take a certain action. By “second-order intention”, Holton means “an intention about an intention”, more specifically, an intention not to allow the first-order intention to be defeated in the face of contrary inclinations that might deflect the agent from her first-order intention (Holton, 2009, pp. 9-11; p. 77).<sup>34</sup>

To take an example, suppose the agent comes to an intention to abstain from drinking tonight. This intention is what Holton takes as a first-order intention. The agent, however, knows that the bottle of wine on the dinner table would tempt her to drink. She also knows by experience that she will likely abandon her intention and proceed to drink, subsequent to the temptation to have wine. Along with her first-order intention, the agent might then form a second-order intention to persist in her first-order intention and not to let it be obstructed by contrary inclinations that might arise later. In this case, the agent, on Holton’s view, has a resolution to refrain from drinking.

Some thinkers—for instance, Paul (2011), Maier (2010) and Liberman (2016)—have raised doubts about the effectiveness of resolutions in resisting temptation. They hold that since temptation captures the agent’s attention and presents the tempted option as so desirable, it in turn makes the agent disposed to revise or reconsider her second order intention. In other words, the very same temptation pushing the agent to revise her first-order intention can push

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<sup>34</sup> Ferrero does not find this account of resolution convincing. He argues that when the agent forms an intention, she usually and at least implicitly takes it that the intention is subject to a potential threat of contrary inclinations that might arise later. Such a threat is, according to Ferrero, “the default background” for the planning agent. Further, to benefit from planning, intentions need to be stable in the face of contrary inclinations. Then, intentions, in Ferrero’s view, mostly turn out to have the same structure as resolutions (2012, p. 447).

her to revise her second-order intention. Then, it seems that adding a second-order intention to a first-order one does not make any difference in resisting temptation. If so, this means simple intentions and resolutions are to the same degree susceptible to temptations (Paul, 2011, p. 891; Maier, 2010, p. 361; Liberman, 2016, p. 1).<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Feldman questions the strength of resolutions. He asks what makes resolutions a “stronger” kind of intention; where their strength stems from (2013, Sec. I).

In reaction, Holton emphasises that it is not, in his view, the case that a resolution is by its nature more stable and effective than a simple intention when contrary inclinations come up. Rather, a resolution is *meant* to be so (Holton, 2009, p. 11).

Having introduced “resolution” into his picture, Holton distinguishes between “caprice” and “weakness of will”. While caprice, for Holton, consists in an over-ready revision of an intention, weakness of will is to revise a resolution too readily. This implies that if the agent revises her first-order intention over readily, it would not, for Holton, be a case of weakness of will, but a case of caprice. Nonetheless, Holton acknowledges that it is difficult to recognise whether what the agent too readily revises is a simple intention or a resolution (Holton, 2009, p. 77).

Having clarified what Holton has in mind by “resolution”, dealing with the second question is in order.

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<sup>35</sup> Having argued against Holton’s view of resolutions, Liberman proceeds to offer an alternative account. On her view, resolutions are the conjunction of a first-order intention and a second-order desire. She argues that while an intention cannot obstruct temptation, a desire can (2016, p. 1). For further detail, see Liberman (2016).

## II. Over-Ready Revision

As already mentioned, weakness of will is, on Holton's view, to revise a resolution too readily, that is, when it is not reasonable to revise it. This account provokes the question of when it is reasonable (or rational) to revise a resolution and when it is not. To answer this question, Holton refers to Bratman's *two-tier* account of the rationality of (non-)reconsideration of an intention.<sup>36</sup>

On Bratman's *two-tier* model, to determine whether it is rational to reconsider an intention (the lower tier), we first refer to tendencies or habits from which the agent's (non-)reconsideration results (the higher tier). Then, we assess whether these tendencies are rational for the agent to have. If tendencies from which (say) reconsideration issues are rational for the agent to have, this implies that it is rational to reconsider the intention under consideration. By contrast, if these tendencies are not rational for the agent to have, it then follows that it is not rational for the agent to reconsider the intention (Bratman, 1999, p. 68; Holton, 2009, pp. 74-75; p. 141).

Holton's chief aim of appealing to Bratman's two-tier model is to account for the rationality of (non-)revision of resolutions, that is, to clarify when it is rational to revise a resolution and when it is not. However, Bratman's model explains the rationality of (non-)reconsideration of intentions in terms of the rationality of tendencies from which the agent's (non-)reconsideration follows.

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<sup>36</sup> There is a disagreement between Holton and Bratman on whether the *two-tier* model can be applied to account for the rationality of (non-)reconsideration of resolutions. Bratman holds that it cannot since resolutions have a different structure from simple intentions. However, Holton disagrees with him, and tries to account for the rationality of (non-)reconsideration of resolutions by appealing to Bratman's *two-tier* model (Holton, 2009, p. 141).

This approach raises at least two further questions. First, why Bratman and, following Bratman, Holton appeals to the two-tier model, the model referring to the agent's tendencies. Second, why Holton spells out the rationality of (non-)revision of resolutions by virtue of the rationality of (non-)reconsideration of resolutions. Answering these two questions is in order.

#### **i. Why the two-tier model**

The first issue, which may be initially put to Bratman and then Holton, who adopts Bratman's two-tier approach, is the following. Why does (say) Bratman elucidate the rationality of (non-)reconsideration of intentions by adopting the two-tier model, the approach referring to tendencies or habits from which the agent's (non-)reconsideration results? In other words, the question is whether there is any specific reason for doing so instead of explaining the rationality of (non-)reconsideration of intentions without appealing to tendencies from which the agent's (non-)reconsideration stems, the account that one might label a one-tier model, if you like.

In response, Bratman's reason for accounting for the rationality of (non-)reconsideration in terms of the rationality of habits or tendencies from which (non-)reconsideration follows is partly because he believes that (non-)reconsideration itself is not very often a matter of deliberation; rather, it is a matter of habits or tendencies "in the background" (Bratman, 2014, pp. 296-297). In agreement with Bratman, Holton asserts that on many occasions, our (non-)reconsideration issues from undeliberative tendencies we have, the tendencies determining whether to reconsider a resolution (2009, pp. 146-147).

## **ii. The rationality of (non-)revision in terms of the rationality of (non-)reconsideration**

The second issue, which is more specifically for Holton, is the following. It is why Holton tries to resolve the rationality of (non-)revision of resolutions in virtue of the rationality of (non-)reconsideration of resolutions.

In reaction, Holton does so because he believes weakness of will, as over-ready revision of a resolution, arises when the agent is “too ready to reconsider” her resolution. On this picture, the agent’s reconsideration is a case of over-ready reconsideration once her reconsideration stems from “tendencies” that it is not reasonable (or rational) for the agent to have (Holton, 2009, p. 71; p. 75).

If that is the case, one may wonder which tendencies of (non-)reconsideration are reasonable (or rational) for the agent to have. Further, it may be asked why Holton insists that over-ready revision of a resolution (or weakness of will) occurs once the agent reconsiders her resolution too readily. In what follows, I shall deal with these two issues.

## **iii. The rationality of tendencies of (non-)reconsideration**

To answer the question of which tendencies of (non-)reconsideration are reasonable to have, Holton tries to sketch some general principles of the rationality of tendencies for (non-)reconsideration of resolutions while admitting that it is impossible to give an exhaustive list. According to Holton, “it is rational to have a tendency not to reconsider a resolution” on the following occasions (2009, p. 160):

- when the agent faces contrary inclinations that her resolution is aimed to resist.

To take an example, the agent believes she ought to do the cleaning on Saturday. She then resolves to do so while anticipating that she may later be tempted to abstain from doing the cleaning, perhaps because of laziness. However, she later feels a temptation to have a lazy day on Saturday, thereby being reluctant to do the cleaning. In this case, it is reasonable for her to have a tendency not to reconsider her resolution. That is because, all other things being equal, if the agent reconsiders her resolution, her reconsideration stems from reluctance or laziness that her resolution is aimed to overcome.

- when the agent's judgement is worse than it was at the time of forming her resolution.

Assume the agent resolves while having clear thought to go back home immediately after tonight's drinking. She resolves to do so because she knows that by getting drunk, she will be more likely to pick a fight with others if she hangs around the streets after drinking. In this case, it is, on Holton's picture, reasonable for the agent to have a tendency not to reconsider her resolution when she is drunk because it prevents her from thinking clearly.

By contrast, "it is rational to have a tendency to reconsider a resolution" in cases like the following (Holton, 2009, p. 160):

- where the agent's reasons for forming her resolution derive from goals that would not be any longer achieved.

Suppose the agent resolves to go to a library to borrow a book next Monday. However, she later realises that next Monday is a bank holiday; and the library will be closed on that day. In this case, it is reasonable for her to have a tendency to reconsider her resolution since the agent's aim of resolving to go to the library on Monday, which is borrowing the book, cannot be achieved, given that the library will be closed on that day.

- where circumstances change significantly in ways that the agent did not expect at the time of forming her resolution.

Take the case where the agent resolves to give up drinking coffee and embarks on acting as she resolves. However, it causes her to suffer from such severe headaches that it hampers her life. Even taking painkillers does not work. Further suppose the agent did not know or anticipate that quitting drinking coffee would result in such great suffering. In this case, it is, in Holton's view, reasonable for the agent to have a tendency to reconsider her resolution.<sup>37</sup>

- where the agent realises she has come to her resolution as a result of faulty reasoning or wrong information.

Suppose the agent thinks that her project is due in three weeks. She then engages in practical reasoning to figure out whether she could submit in time if she goes to the gym at the weekend. Given thinking that she should submit her work in three weeks, she judges that she would have enough time to finish and submit her project in time. Consequently, she resolves to go to the gym at the weekend. However, she later realises that she was wrong and the project is due

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<sup>37</sup> A parallel case to that of the smoker is given by Holton (2009, pp. 90-91).

next week. In this case it is reasonable for her to have a tendency to reconsider her resolution since it has been formed on the basis of incorrect information.

#### **iv. Why the over-ready reconsideration of a resolution yields weakness of will**

The second issue concerns Holton's idea that weakness of will, as an over-ready revision of a resolution, occurs once the agent reconsiders her resolution too readily. One may wonder why Holton thinks so. Does it imply that Holton identifies revision with reconsideration? Or, does it mean the reconsideration of a resolution, from Holton's perspective, always results in revising it?

In response to the first question, Holton confirms that revision is different from reconsideration since the revision of a resolution means to change it, whereas the reconsideration of a resolution does not necessarily result in changing it. Reconsidering a resolution is, for Holton, to reopen the question of what to do, thereby undermining the stability of the resolution.<sup>38</sup> This implies that the agent makes herself open to revising her resolution, especially when the agent reconsiders her resolution on the occasions on which it is not reasonable for her to do so (Holton, 2009, p. 121).

Although Holton takes revising a resolution to mean changing it, there is, controversially, a sense of revising which does not involve a change. To clarify it, suppose the agent reconsiders her resolution; however, she does not eventually change it. In this case, one might claim that even if reconsideration

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<sup>38</sup> When the agent intends to X, it standardly implies she settles on X in a way that she takes X as a stable point around which her intrapersonal and interpersonal activities are coordinated. Following Bratman, such *stability* is a key feature of intentions, in a broad sense; where by "stability", Bratman and, following Bratman, Holton, means to be relatively resistant to reconsideration and revision. Then, it suggests that the reconsideration of intentions causes their stability to be removed from them (Bratman, 1999, p. 16; Holton, 2009, p. 2; p. 122).

does not result in changing the agent's resolution, there is, arguably, a sense that what occurs when the agent reconsiders her resolution without eventually changing it is that she abandons her resolution and opens once again the question of which course of action to take. Then, she ends in forming the same resolution.

If that is the case, the claimer may then take it that in the intervening period, the agent is not resolving to do the action initially resolved to take and simultaneously reconsidering what to do. Instead, the agent drops her resolution and then replaces it with the same one. That is because resolving to do an action, the claimer may hold, means treating it as settled. If so, it would then be odd to say the agent is reconsidering what to do while treating it as settled. Then, the claimer may view this as a case in which the agent revises her resolution in a sense that she drops her initial resolution, once again engages in deliberating what to do, and then forms another resolution which is the same as the prior one. Thus, this gives us a sense of revising a resolution in which the agent revises her resolution and does not change it.

It is worth noting that even if it is, for the sake of argument, granted that what happens in this case is that the agent in a sense revises her resolution, it would not undermine Holton's view that over-ready reconsideration of a resolution leads the agent to revise it. Rather, it enforces his idea.

Given this sense of revision, the answer to the question of whether the reconsideration of a resolution always leads to revising it, is positive. That is, any reconsideration automatically involves revising.

As earlier mentioned, Holton takes the revision of a resolution to involve changing it. Then, the sense of revision in which Holton is interested is quite distinct from the sense in which the revision of a resolution does not involve changing it. As a result, I leave aside the sense of revision which does not require change, and focus on Holton's sense of revision involving changing a resolution. Having done so, I shall outline Holton's response to the question of whether the reconsideration of a resolution always results in revising it.

Holton does not claim that over-ready reconsideration of a resolution always yields its revision. Rather, he believes that this is what standardly happens. To see why Holton thinks this is so and how, in standard cases, the over-ready reconsideration of a resolution, in Holton's view, causes the agent to revise this resolution, take a case where the agent faces some contrary inclinations that her resolution is aimed to resist. Suppose the agent's conclusion of practical reasoning is that it would be better to abstain from eating pudding at tonight's party. She then resolves to do so. However, having faced pudding at the party, she is tempted to have some despite her prior resolution to refrain. If the agent reconsiders her prior resolution, this, on Holton's view, means she reopens the question of what to do, whether to eat pudding or not. In this case, temptation would, according to Holton, catch the agent's attention to the tempting option, thereby corrupting her judgement of what to do. That is, temptation typically causes the agent to shift her prior judgement and make a new judgement in favour of the desired option at the time of reconsideration. The agent might, for instance, judge that it is better to take the desired course of action. Holton calls

such a shift in judgement, induced by temptation or contrary inclinations, “judgement shift” (2009, pp. 97-100).<sup>39</sup>

It is worth highlighting that, it does not, in Holton’s view, mean that in every case where the agent is faced with temptation, it would result in judgement shift. There might be cases in which the agent judges it to be wrong or irrational to take the tempting option. In such cases, the agent might rationally resist temptation and not revise her prior resolution; instead, she proceeds to act on her resolution (Holton, 2009, p. 138).

Nonetheless, Holton believes that, in numerous cases, temptation yields judgement shift; and it in turn leads the agent to revise her original resolution (2009, p. 138). However, in such cases, it is not, according to Holton, reasonable for the agent to revise it. That is because this revision stems from the temptation that the agent’s resolution is formed to defeat. That is why Holton insists that weakness of will, as over-ready revision of a resolution, typically arises when the agent reconsiders her resolution on the occasions on which it is not reasonable for her to do so.

Having argued for the idea that the over-ready reconsideration of a resolution standardly yields the over-ready revision of it, Holton’s suggestion for avoiding weakness of will is to refrain from too readily reconsidering her resolution. In other words, sticking to a resolution in the situation in which it is rational for the agent to do so is, in Holton’s view, brought about by refusing to reconsider her resolution (2009, p. 71; p. 121).

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<sup>39</sup> Holton refers to some empirical studies done by Karniol and Miller (1983) in order to support his idea of how temptation works in standard cases. For more detail, see Holton (2009, pp. 98-101); Karniol and Miller (1983).

In reaction to Holton's idea that avoiding weakness of will is achieved by abstaining from reconsideration, one might claim that there seems to be at least one further way of avoiding weakness of will, given that Holton admits that not every case of over-ready reconsideration of a resolution would yield judgement shift and over-ready revision. Another way of refraining from weakness of will, an objector may suggest, is that the agent ensures that when she over-readily reconsiders her resolution, she would not allow temptation to corrupt her judgement, thereby making sure that she would not revise her resolution, but stick to it.<sup>40</sup> Having blocked temptation-corrupted judgement and over-ready revision, the agent may succeed in sticking to her resolution.

In response, first, my question for the objector is how the agent can ensure against temptation-corrupted judgement and over-ready revision when she is reconsidering a resolution over-readily. It is difficult at least for me to see how this insurance is possible, especially if we take it for granted that temptation catches the agent's attention to the tempting option.

Second, Holton may, as previously mentioned, admit that over-ready reconsideration does not always yield judgement shift and over-ready revision. Rather, the agent rationally judges she ought not to take the tempted option. Nonetheless, Holton insists that temptation involved in over-ready reconsideration naturally works by producing judgement shift. This means when the agent over-readily reconsiders her resolution, temptation would standardly lead the agent to make judgement(s) in line with the tempting option (2009, p. 79; p. 138). Thus, if what very often happens in standard cases of over-ready reconsideration is that the agent re-assesses her resolution so that

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<sup>40</sup> Putting aside the view that the reconsideration of a resolution implies revising it.

she gives the tempted option superiority over the resolved option, the objector's proposal for avoiding weakness of will would not be an effective strategy in a sense that it fails at least frequently to prevent the agent from over-ready revision. Further, even if this strategy works, the question is what the point of reconsideration is. Reconsideration involves a cost; it takes time and effort. If the strategy is to reconsider a resolution, but persist in it, I cannot see any obvious benefit of doing so. If that is the case, it would not be practically rational to adopt this strategy as it violates a principle that is, according to Holton, a principle of practical rationality. This principle instructs the agent not to take actions that she believes cost her more than they benefit her (Holton, 2009, p. 143).

#### **v. Summary**

Weakness of will is, for Holton, to revise a resolution too readily. On his view, over-ready revision, as already explained, arises once the agent reconsiders her resolution on an occasion on which it is not reasonable for her to do so. Since over-ready reconsideration standardly yields over-ready revision, Holton's proposed strategy to avoid weakness of will is to refrain from over-ready reconsideration of a resolution.

Having expounded Holton's view of weakness of will, the next section points out some issues concerning some of Holton's ideas.

## **Section 2. Some Issues Relating to some of Holton's Ideas**

### **I. Weakness of Will without Over-Ready Reconsideration**

The first issue concerns Holton's approach to avoiding weakness of will by abstaining from over-ready reconsideration. Reconsideration, as reopening the question of what to do, entails engaging in practical reasoning to re-settle on which course of action to take. As previously mentioned, Holton insists that sticking to a resolution, in the situation in which it is rational for the agent to do so, thereby avoiding weakness of will, is achieved by refraining from reconsidering the resolution.

This gives the impression that Holton believes that as long as the agent refrains from over-ready reconsideration, she will avert weakness of will, as Holton understands it. As far as I can see, it is not clear whether Holton allows the possibility of cases where the agent too readily revises her prior resolution, thereby exhibiting weakness of will, although she does not engage in reconsidering it. Nonetheless, it is worth drawing attention to this possibility.

In my view, weakness of will, as Holton conceives it, can sometimes occur even though the agent does not reconsider her resolution before revising it. This means it is not the case that weakness of will, as Holton understands it, arises only if the agent too readily reconsiders her resolution. That is because when the agent faces some temptation triggered by contrary inclinations, it is quite possible that the temptation at least sometimes leads the agent to revise her prior resolution, even though the agent does not reconsiders the resolution. If it is the case that there are cases in which the agent too readily revises her resolution without reconsidering it, this means weakness of will, in Holton's

sense, occurs despite the fact that the agent does not engage in reconsidering her resolution.

To take an example, suppose that Sara resolves to be on a restricted diet to lose weight. More specifically, she resolves not to eat any sweets. One day, her colleague brings some fresh doughnuts to work. The sight and smell of fresh doughnuts are so appealing that she immediately picks up and eats one of them without reconsidering whether to eat. In this case, what happens is that having faced temptation to eat doughnuts, Sara abandons her resolution and intentionally and freely takes the action as opposed to her resolved one without engaging in deliberation on whether to eat. When Sara abandons her resolution and proceeds to have doughnuts, I take it that she in a sense revises her resolution. If so, this means she revises her resolution in the face of contrary inclinations without engaging in practical reasoning. In this case, weakness of will arises although the agent does not reconsider her resolution in the face of the temptation to eat doughnuts. If that is right, it suggests that it is not the case that sticking to a resolution in the situation in which it is reasonable for the agent to do so is brought about by refraining from reconsidering the resolution.

It is worth noting that I do not deny the phenomenon of “judgement shift”. Nor do I disagree that the over-ready reconsideration of a resolution sometimes results in revising the resolution. Rather, the point that I am making is to emphasise the possibility of cases where the agent ends up revising her resolution over readily even though she does not reconsider it. This implies that it is not always the case that maintaining a resolution is achieved by obstructing over-ready reconsideration.

With respect to the Sara case, one might react in the following way. The objector may claim that Sara might not permanently revise her prior resolution to refrain from eating sweets. Instead, she might make an exception to her resolution when she is faced with fresh doughnuts. That is, temptation may lead her to come to having sweets this time, even if we suppose she does not engage in practical reasoning. If that is the case, the objector may claim, it appears that it is not true that Sara revises her resolution without reconsideration. Rather, what happens in this case is to make an exception to her resolution.

To tackle this challenge to the idea that the Sara case shows an over-ready revision of a resolution without reconsideration, it is worth first noting that when a resolution is taken as a specific kind of intention, “the exception [to it, according to Holton,] requires a revision” (Holton, 2009, p. 91). In other words, the agent’s exception to her prior resolution, for Holton, implies that she makes a revision to it. Then, it appears that in the Sara case, she, at least in Holton’s view, revises her prior resolution without reconsideration; and that is the point that I am trying to make.

Further, even if we grant that Sara makes an exception to her prior resolution, this would imply that she at least temporarily abandons the resolution and takes the opposite course of action, thereby failing to stick to her resolution at the time of eating doughnuts. She does so because of facing temptation to have some doughnuts. If that is the case, it does not, as far as I can see, undermine the main point for which I am arguing. The main point has been to illustrate that it is not always the case that sticking to a resolution is

brought about by refusing to reconsider the resolution when the agent faces contrary inclinations.

One might hold that there is a distinction between “to refrain from reconsidering (or to refuse to reconsider)” a resolution and simply “not to reconsider” it. It might be claimed that “refraining from reconsidering (or refusing to reconsider)” implies a deliberate attempt to avoid reconsidering. However, the term “not reconsidering” does not suggest that a deliberate effort is involved in the absence of reconsideration. If that is the case, the following response to the Sara case is open to Holton. It may be claimed that the Sara example does not undermine Holton’s idea that avoiding weakness of will is achieved by abstaining from reconsidering a resolution too readily. That is because this example does not show that Sara fails to stick to her resolution although she (deliberately) refrains from reconsidering it in the face of temptation. Rather, it just indicates the possibility of another way to get weakness of will, in Holton’s sense.

My reaction is the following. Even if we accept this distinction and Holton’s response to the Sara example, it does not undercut my point of offering this example. My main point has been to draw attention to the possibility of over-ready revision of a resolution without reconsidering it.

## **II. Being Accused of Irrationality whatever the Agent Does**

The second issue relates to Holton’s principles of the rationality of (non-)reconsideration of resolutions, the principles I have outlined under the subheading of “the rationality of tendencies of (non-)reconsideration”. In my view, these principles are such that they may put the agent in a situation where

she would face difficulty when she comes to exercise these principles. More seriously, the agent would be accused of irrationality whatever she does.

Take a case where the agent reaches the judgement that it would be better to go to university by bike tomorrow. Since she knows she might later be tempted not to do so because of lethargy or laziness, she resolves to cycle to the university tomorrow. Although she is later tempted to revise her resolution due to laziness, she tries to resist the temptation to go by car instead of bike. Further, assume her husband tells her at dinnertime that he has resolved to cycle work tomorrow. However, they have just one bicycle.

Given that the agent was not aware of her husband's resolution at the time of forming her resolution, being aware of her husband's resolution can be taken as new information that changes the circumstances in a way that the agent did not anticipate at the time of forming her resolution. Then, it is, according to one of Holton's principles, rational for the agent to have a tendency to reconsider her resolution. Nonetheless, given the agent's existing temptation to go by car instead of bike because of laziness, it is, on Holton's picture, rational for the agent to have a tendency not to reconsider her resolution. If so, it then appears that Holton's principles put the agent in conflict in a way such that it is not clear for the agent whether or not to reconsider her resolution.

On the face of it, Holton might claim that whether or not it is reasonable for the agent to reconsider her resolution depends on the agent's tendency leading her (not) to reconsider her resolution. To clarify this answer, it has been mentioned that it is, on Holton's view, reasonable to reconsider a resolution when reconsideration stems from tendencies that are rational for the agent to

have. By contrast, if reconsideration results from tendencies that are not rational for the agent to have, it would not be reasonable for the agent to reconsider her resolution. Taken together, it then follows that the rationality of reconsideration rests on the rationality of tendencies from which reconsideration stems.

In response, I grant Holton that whether or not it is reasonable to reconsider a resolution relies on the agent's tendency for (non-)reconsideration. Nonetheless, in the bicycle case, it is difficult to see whether the agent ought to put weight on the tendency for reconsideration or non-reconsideration. On the one hand, it is, on Holton's picture, rational for the agent to have a tendency to reconsider her resolution since she receives some new information changing the circumstances from what was expected. Given that she has this tendency, it is rational for the agent to reconsider her resolution. On the other hand, she still feels the temptation to go by car, the temptation issuing from laziness; and she is not able to set aside it. Then, it is, according to Holton, rational for the agent to have a tendency not to reconsider her resolution when she faces some contrary inclinations, which this resolution is formed to overcome. Given that the agent has this tendency, it is reasonable for her not to reconsider her resolution. All other things being equal, these two tendencies lead the agent in opposite directions, while it seems both are equal in weight. Then, it is not clear on which tendency the agent ought to put weight and how to act.

If the agent puts weight on the tendency for reconsideration on the grounds that circumstances appear differently from what she anticipated, it is not clear how the agent might, within Holton's framework, be able to block the influence of laziness and the corresponding temptation on her judgement while

engaging in reconsidering her resolution, given that she has been tempted not to go by bike because of laziness. By contrast, if the agent weights the tendency for non-reconsideration and does not reconsider her resolution due to the existence of contrary inclination and the corresponding temptation, it is more likely that the agent is, on Holton's picture, regarded as stubborn. That is because stubbornness, for Holton, arises when the agent sticks to her resolution and refrains from reconsidering the resolution while it is reasonable for her to do so (Holton, 2009, pp. 79-80). In this case, it is reasonable for the agent to reconsider her resolution because of receiving new information that changes the circumstances from what the agent anticipated at the time of forming her resolution.

If that is the case, we have got a situation where Holton's principles would come into conflict in such a way that they would lead the agent to a dilemma that she is accused of some sort of irrationality whatever she does.<sup>41</sup> If she reconsiders her resolution, she could be charged for weakness of will due to reconsidering her prior resolution in a situation in which it is not rational for the agent to do so, given the existence of temptation and its effect on the agent's judgement. If she avoids reconsideration, she could be accused of stubbornness on account of abstaining from reconsideration while it is rational for her to reconsider, given receiving new information.

Holton might acknowledge that it is difficult to decide whether it is reasonable for the agent to reconsider her resolution when she has two conflicting tendencies leading the agent in opposite directions. He may then

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<sup>41</sup> It is worth noting that if the agent were capable of setting aside her contrary inclinations and reconsidering her resolution without being influenced by her laziness, she would not be faced with this dilemma.

assert that whether to put weight on (non-)reconsideration is “an exercise in practical psychology”. Agents should learn when to put weight on reconsideration and when to put weight on non-reconsideration (Holton, 2009, pp. 160-161).

In reaction to Holton’s response, even if we grant that it is a matter of learning, it does not tackle the issue that Holton’s principles put the agent in a situation where she would manifest some sort of irrationality whatever she does.

### **III. Some Clarification**

Having pointed out some issues relating to some of Holton’s ideas, I need to make some clarifications. The first issue has been relevant to Holton’s claim that the strategy that the agent needs to stick to her resolution in the face of contrary inclinations, thereby avoiding weakness of will, is brought about by abstaining from reconsideration. The second issue has concerned the principles Holton offers to account for the rationality of (non-)reconsideration of a resolution. Thus, these issues have nothing to do with Holton’s fundamental idea that weakness of will is, roughly, to fail to act on an intention. Rather, I agree that the agent may show weakness of will when she revises (or abandons) her resolution too readily. However, I disagree with his view that cases of weakness of will are only cases in which the agent revises her resolution too readily. That is to say, over-ready revision of resolutions is, in my view, just one sort of case where the agent might exhibit weakness of will, but not the only one.

Given that the two issues I have addressed have not been about Holton's underlying view of weakness of will, it should not make readers puzzled when I deem his basic idea promising in the sense that it can capture some cases where the agent shows weakness of will in acting as she does despite not acting against her all-things-considered judgement.

Having analysed Holton's view of weakness of will and discussed some issues concerning some of his ideas, I shall point out Mele's suggestion for understanding weakness of will in what follows. I have two reasons for doing so. First, Mele's idea provides a response to Holton's account. Second, Mele's view supports my idea that the agent might show weakness of will in both the cases where she violates her all-things-considered judgement and the cases where she violates her intention. I will discuss my view of weakness of will in the next part.

### **Section 3. Mele's Reaction to Holton's View of Weakness of Will**

In his book, *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* (2009), Holton challenges the traditional account of weakness of will. While holding that the agent shows akrasia when she intentionally and freely acts contrary to her all-things-considered judgement, Holton does not, as previously mentioned, accept the identification of akrasia with weakness of will. Nor does he take akrasia to be one sort of case where the agent manifests weakness of will, among other possible cases, for instance, cases of resolution-violation. Rather, weakness of will and akrasia are, for Holton, two distinct phenomena.

To support his idea that weakness of will differs from akrasia, where weakness of will is, roughly, to fail to act on one's resolution, Holton offers the

Christabel case. She, who is unmarried, resolves to have an affair although she believes that it is best not to do so, all-things-considered. However, when the time of action comes, she loses her nerve, thereby abandoning her resolution. She fails to fulfil her resolution not because of judging that it would, all-things-considered, be best not to have the affair, but due to being afraid (2009, p. 84). In this case, we are, Holton states, inclined to attribute weakness of will to Christabel in acting as she does although she acts according to her all-things-considered judgement. She manifests weakness of will due to over-readily abandoning her resolution, but in doing so she does not act contrary to her all-things-considered judgement. This case thus shows that we could have weakness of will without akrasia. Holton then proceeds to assert that weakness of will is best characterised in terms of over-readily revising a resolution, but not in terms of acting contrary to the agent's all-things-considered judgement.

In reaction, Mele acknowledges that Christabel's failure to act on her resolution is a case of weakness of will although she eventually acts in accordance with her all-things-considered judgement. Christabel shows weakness of will in acting as she does because her fear, as a sort of contrary inclination, deflects her from her prior resolution (Mele, 2012, pp. 20-21).

In a parallel case, Mele introduces Rocky who promises his mother that he won't play football any more. Nonetheless, he is later invited to play. Although Rocky judges it would, all-things-considered, be better not to play, he intends to play. He, however, loses his nerve when the time of action comes, thereby not playing. He acts as he does due to feeling afraid, but not because of judging it would be better not to play, all things considered. In this case, Rocky, Mele

claims, shows weakness of will in failing to play despite acting according to his all-things-considered judgement (Mele, 2012, p. 14).

To make sense of the Christabel and Rocky cases as cases of weakness of will, Mele's suggestion is to take the notion of akrasia to be broader in a way that captures not only cases of weakness of will as traditionally treated, but also cases like the Christabel and Rocky ones in which the agents exhibit weakness of will despite acting according to their all-things-considered judgements. In doing so, Mele holds that the notion of akratic action can be characterized in terms of violating two kinds of practical commitment: *evaluative* and *executive commitments*.

An *evaluative commitment* is made by the agent's all-things-considered judgement. When the agent reaches the judgement that it would, all-things-considered, be better to do a certain action, she is rationally committed to taking this action, if she acts freely and intentionally at all. If she freely and intentionally acts contrary to her all-things-considered judgement, she will violate her *evaluative commitment*. Traditionally speaking, the commitment violated in akratic action is the *evaluative* one. Mele calls this kind of akratic action "orthodox akratic action".

An *executive commitment* is constituted by the agent's intention (in a broad sense including resolution). When the agent intends to take a certain action, she commits herself to do this action.<sup>42</sup> If the agent revises her intention, she will abandon her *executive commitment*. Looking back on the Christabel and Rocky cases fitting into Holton's notion of weakness of will, it is the *executive*

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<sup>42</sup> Mele does not clarify why the agent's all-things-considered judgement or intention make her committed to act on her judgement or intention. However, I try to make clear why it is the case when I will discuss my positive account of weakness of will.

*commitment* that is withdrawn by the agents while it is not reasonable for them to do so. Mele labels these cases “unorthodox akratic action” (Mele, 2012, pp. 14-17).

In the Christabel and Rocky cases, the agent acts akratically, in Mele’s sense, because, as previously mentioned, Mele takes the notion of akrasia more broadly in a way that it covers both the agent’s violation of an evaluative commitment and the violation of an executive one. This means that the agent, for Mele, acts akratically when she intentionally and freely fails to act on her evaluative or executive commitment. This implies that, contrary to Holton, Mele does not hold that akrasia and weakness of will are two distinct conceptions. Rather, he takes both actions performed contrary to the agent’s all-things-considered judgement and actions done over-readily against the agent’s prior intention to be akratic (or weak-willed) actions.

It is worth highlighting that Mele and Holton both agree that cases of judgement-violation and intention-violation genuinely exist. That is, both of them recognise these two phenomena. However, Mele brings out and emphasises the similarities between these two kinds of case, thereby classifying both cases as weakness of will (or akrasia). This means he takes the notion of weakness of will so broadly that it covers both cases while using the terms “weakness of will” and “akrasia” interchangeably. By contrast, Holton focuses attention on the differences between these two kinds of case, thereby refusing to take both cases as weakness of will. Holton uses the term “weakness of will” to refer only to intention-violation and “akrasia” only to judgement-violation.

Mele's view seems promising to me. That is because the agent may intuitively exhibit weakness of will in both kinds of case, namely, cases of judgement-violation and cases of intention-violation. This implies that the traditional and Holton's accounts can each capture just some cases where we are inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent. However, neither account can in itself accommodate both kinds of case where the agent may manifest weakness of will. Unlike the traditional and Holton's views, Mele's account of weakness of will can capture both the judgement-violation and intention-violation cases. Then, since it intuitively seems that the agent may display weakness of will in both kinds of case, Mele's approach to explaining weakness of will, in my view, works better, given my methodological assumption.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, his proposal is the line of thought that I am disposed to follow in order to give my positive account of weakness of will. This will be the task of the second part of this work.

#### **Section 4. Conclusion**

This chapter has considered Holton's view of weakness of will, as a prominent view that has provoked widespread debate over the notion of weakness of will in the literature. I have first expounded his account. Then, I have pointed out some issues relating to some of Holton's ideas. Finally, I have sketched Mele's idea providing a reaction to Holton's account of weakness of will. Mele has suggested that we take the notion of *akrasia* (or weakness of will) to be broader than traditionally conceived, such that it captures cases of intention-violation as well as cases of judgement-violation. To do so, Mele's proposal is to

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<sup>43</sup> As mentioned in chapter 1 (Introduction), I have made the methodological assumption that a philosophical theory of weakness of will should be able to elaborate what common sense takes to be cases of weakness of will.

understand akrasia (or weakness of will) in terms of violating two practical commitments, *evaluative* and *executive* ones. Since it intuitively seems to me that the agent may exhibit weakness of will in both kinds of case, namely, cases of judgement-violation and intention-violation, I have found Mele's idea promising. As a result, I am disposed to develop this line of thought on understanding the notion of weakness of will. This is my main concern in the next part.

## **Part 2**

### **Chapter 4. Weakness of Will in Terms of Withdrawing (or Acting against) One's Practical Commitment(s) without a Good Enough**

#### **Normative Reason**

My proposal is that weakness of will arises when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason, where these practical commitments are those to which she is subject in the process of her intentional, conscious and free action. This chapter sets out to provide a clear picture of the proposed account by elucidating some of its key elements and essential characteristics.

To this end, I will first explain what I have in my mind by “the process of intentional action”. Then, I will spell out the practical commitments involved in the process of the agent's intentional action. The discussion of practical commitments may raise the question of what makes the agent subject to practical commitments. In other words, it may raise the question of why the agent is committed to acting in a certain way in the process of her action. To shed light on this question, I will address some requirements of rationality, drawing on the work of John Broome (2013), in the third section. Then, I will outline some key features of the proposed account. Finally, I shall discuss some implications of the proposed account and answer some possible questions.

The findings of this chapter suggest that there is an overlap between akrasia, in its strict (or narrow) sense referring to judgement-violation, and weakness of will, as I conceive it. That is, some cases of akrasia (in its narrow sense) are, on

my picture, cases of weakness of will, as I understand it. However, there are some cases of *akrasia* that are not cases of weakness of will, and some cases of weakness of will that are not cases of *akrasia*. Further, cases of alleged *inverse akrasia* fit well into my proposed account as cases of weakness of will. Moreover, although the proposed account is inspired by Mele's idea of weakness of will (2012), it, as I will explain in section 5, goes beyond his view in several ways.

Before undertaking the primary task of this chapter, it seems necessary to point out some issues. First, it does not, on my view, matter whether the agent withdraws, abandons, revises or acts against her practical commitment(s). Instead, what is crucial is that she does one or the other without a good enough (or sufficiently weighty)<sup>44</sup> normative reason; where "reason" can refer to a single reason or a set of reasons. Further, by "without a good enough normative reason", I mean that what motivates the agent to act as she does is not a good enough reason in a normative sense. Hence, it cannot justify the action that she does, the action opposed to what she is practically committed to doing.<sup>45</sup>

Second, one of the central components of the proposed account is the agent's practical reason, the reason for acting. It plays a crucial role in determining cases of weakness of will since not all cases of withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) practical commitment(s) would, on my view, be cases of weakness of will. Rather, it depends on whether or not the agent acts as she does with a good enough normative reason. Although the

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<sup>44</sup> I use the phrases "good enough" and "sufficiently weighty" interchangeably.

<sup>45</sup> There is a distinction between "normative" and "motivating" reasons in the literature. A "normative reason" for an action is the reason that justifies performing the action or makes it right for the agent to take the action. A "motivating reason" for an action refers to the reason for which the agent acts as she does (Alvarez, 2016, Sec. 1; Sec. 2).

agent's practical reason is key in my account, I do not wish to argue what it is to be a good enough normative reason, either in this chapter or later. That is because various theories of reasons have different views on what counts as a reason and whether or not it is a good enough normative reason; and it will be beyond the scope of the present work to argue for and against one theory or the other. Thus, I will refrain from discussing which theory of reasons is correct.

Nonetheless, the third part of this thesis will examine two different prominent theories of reasons, namely, the Humean and Kantian views. The aim of doing so is not to argue which one is the right theory. Instead, the idea is to see what happens when we combine the proposed account of weakness of will with these two prevailing theories of reasons.

Having noted some preliminaries, I move on to the first section.

### **Section 1. The Process of Intentional Action**

This section aims to explain what I have in mind by “the process of action”. It refers to the period that starts before initiating an intentional action and ends by completing it. To keep things manageable, I put aside actions that might not be characterized as intentional, conscious and free actions. I simply assume that at least some actions are performed intentionally, consciously and freely. What I mean by “action” in the rest of the present work refers to this sort of action. Further, for the sake of simplicity, I take it that the agent's intentional action manifests the intention with which she acts as she does.<sup>46</sup> In the process of the

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<sup>46</sup> This view on intentional action is called the “simple view” by Bratman (1999, p. 112). For more details, see Bratman (1999; Ch. 8). For a defence of the “simple view”, see Di Nucci (2009).

agent's action, it is, following Searle (2001, p. 15), possible to consider several stages.

Once the question of what to do arises, the agent might first engage in practical reasoning and weigh the reasons that she deems herself to have for and against options open to her (say, X and Y).<sup>47</sup> She might then come to the conclusion that, "in the light of all considerations, I ought to do X", or "it would be better to do X, all-things-considered". Let us call this conclusion a "practical judgement".

It is worth noting that there is some debate on the nature of the conclusion of practical reasoning in the literature.<sup>48</sup> According to one view, the conclusion of practical reasoning is a judgement;<sup>49</sup> however, there are two other views on this issue. While one of them argues for the idea that the conclusion of practical reasoning is an action,<sup>50</sup> the other takes it to be an intention.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, I am not going to argue for and against one view or the others since it is beyond the scope of the present work. Instead, I simply take it that the conclusion is at least sometimes in the form of a judgement like "I ought to do X" or "it would be better to do X". Nevertheless, even if one holds that the conclusion of practical reasoning is an intention or action, it does not undermine the purpose of the present discussion. That is because someone taking that view can focus on the rest of the process. Nor does it threaten my

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<sup>47</sup> It is worth mentioning two things. First, the options are supposed to be competing in a sense that the agent cannot perform them at the same time. Second, for the purpose of the present discussion, it does not matter whether the options are actually open to the agent or she takes them to be so.

<sup>48</sup> For more detail, see Alvarez (2010) and Streumer (2010).

<sup>49</sup> See, Raz (1978) and Audi (1989).

<sup>50</sup> See, Dancy (2004) and Tenenbaum (2007).

<sup>51</sup> See, Broome (1999; 2002; 2009).

account of weakness of will—though it might make its application narrower than I have supposed it to be.

Having reached a practical judgement, the next step is to decide which course of action to take (X or Y); where I take it that in deciding to do, for example, X, the agent forms an intention to do X.<sup>52</sup> Then, we can imagine a gap between practical judgement and intention, what Searle calls “the first gap” (2001, p. 15). It is not, of course, necessarily a temporal gap. Rather, there is a gap in a sense that the agent can intend either according to or against her practical judgement.

In cases where the agent may fail to reach a practical judgement, she still needs to come to a decision about what to do. That is because as long as the agent does not make up her mind about what to do, she may not be able to move further to act, if she acts intentionally, consciously and freely at all. She, then, needs to settle on taking a certain course of action (say, X), thereby intending to do X.

Following Searle (2001, p. 15), the second gap can be taken to be between “intending to do X” and “doing X”, or more precisely, “initiating doing X”. There is a gap in a sense that the agent can subsequently either act or fail to act as she intends, even though there might not be a gap in a temporal sense.

Given that some actions are extended in time, a further stage can be considered, that is, completing the initiated action. The gap between starting to

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<sup>52</sup> It is commonly accepted that deciding to X is to form an intention to X. For example, see Frankfurt (1988, pp. 174-176), McCann (1986, pp. 254-255) and Mele (1992b, p. 156; 2000, p. 101). Of course, not all philosophers endorse this idea. For instance, John McGuire (2016) argues against the view that deciding to X is to be identified with forming an intention to X. For more detail, see McGuire (2016).

perform the action and completing it is taken as the third gap by Searle (2001, p. 15). There is a gap in a sense that the agent might start doing the intended action; however, she then fails to complete the action.

It is worth highlighting that I by no means claim that all the steps mentioned above can be distinguished in all actions. For instance, the agent may not engage in practical reasoning at all; rather, she may intend to act in a certain way without any deliberation on what to do, perhaps as a result of desiring to do the action she does. Nor does it mean that all actions follow the same order offered by the sketched model. For example, referring to Nisbett and Wilson's work (1977), Holton asserts that "deciding to X" (or intending to X) is not always preceded by the agent's judgement; rather, there might be occasions on which the agent's decision or intention is prior to her judgement (Holton, 2009, pp. 64-68).

Nonetheless, for the purpose of the current project, it is not necessary that the agent's action always follows the sketched model in terms of involving all stages and following the specified order. That is because weakness of will, in my view, arises when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason, the practical commitments involved in the process of action. I will later introduce three practical commitments and connect them with Searle's three gaps.<sup>53</sup> If that is the case, this implies that the agent might show weakness of will when she acts against the practical commitment to which she is subject in any of those three gaps, regardless of whether her action conforms to the sketched model.

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<sup>53</sup> It will be the topic of the next section.

To make it clear, suppose the agent withdraws the practical commitment to which she is subject in the second gap without a good enough normative reason. Then, she, on the proposed account, displays weakness of will in the second gap, the gap between intending to do a certain action and initiating it. It does not matter whether or not she had engaged in practical reasoning before intending to do the action. If so, it appears that it won't undermine my account of weakness of will if the agent's action does not involve all the stages outlined earlier, nor does it follow the sketched order.

Having explained what I mean by "the process of action", I shall elucidate some practical commitments to which the agent may be subject in the process of her action. That is the topic of the next section.

## **Section 2. Practical Commitments**

I have proposed an account of weakness of will in terms of withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) the agent's practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason, the commitment(s) to which the agent is subject in the process of her action. This account raises the question of what it is meant by "practical commitment".

This section aims to clarify some practical commitments involved in the process of action. It is worth noting that I do not claim that the practical commitments discussed in this section are the only ones to which the agent might be subject in the process of her action. I will allow the possibility of there being further practical commitments that I have not taken into account.

In my view, we can identify three practical commitments involved in the process of action, the commitments I term *reasoning*, *executive* and

*instrumental* commitments. Further, it is possible to connect these commitments with Searle's three gaps. In what follows, I explain them and their connection with the three gaps.

### **I. Reasoning Commitment**

It has been explained that, following Searle (2001, p. 15), the first gap is between practical judgement and intention. When the agent engages in practical reasoning before deciding what to do, at least in some cases, the agent's aim of doing so is to figure out what to do in order to bring her subsequent conduct<sup>54</sup> in line with the conclusion of her practical reasoning (or her practical judgement). If that is right, it then appears that at least one of the functions of practical reasoning is, following Audi (2006, p. 72; p. 78) and Mele (1995, p. 25), conduct-guiding.

One might object that much practical reasoning is not conduct-guiding. Rather, it might be hypothetical, or retrospective, or directed at others' actions. In response to this claim, the defender might state that these cases are not genuine cases of practical reasoning. Rather, they are taken to be cases of theoretical reasoning about practical matters. I am not going to argue for or against one view or the other. Instead, I put aside the controversial cases just mentioned. I am assuming that at least in some cases, the agent engages in practical reasoning to figure out which course of action to take (or intend to take). She does so in order to subsequently perform (or intend to perform) the action in favour of which she reaches a judgement.

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<sup>54</sup> I take "conduct" in a broad sense including an intention as well as an action.

This implies that by engaging in practical reasoning, the agent commits herself to bringing her subsequent conduct in line with her practical judgement; otherwise practical reasoning would be worthless and a waste of time and energy. This commitment is what Mele (2012, p. 16) calls *evaluative commitment*. However, I label it *practical reasoning commitment*, or for short, *reasoning commitment*.

To see why I have named this commitment differently from Mele, it is worth noting that *evaluative commitment* is, for him, made by the agent's better (or best) judgement. Mele states that once the agent judges that it would be better (or best) to do X, she is "rationally committed" to performing X (2012, pp. 14-16). I accept that the agent will be committed to bringing her intention or action in line with her practical judgement, if she wants to intend or act at all after reaching the judgement in question. Nonetheless, the agent is, in my view, committed to doing so, no matter what the form of practical judgement is.

The form of practical judgement can, in my view, vary. The agent occasionally seeks what it would be best or better to do; she might sometimes look for an option that is good enough. In some cases, her aim might be to figure out what she ought to do. Following Thomson (2008, pp. 713-715), the conclusion of practical reasoning might be sometimes "evaluative" and occasionally "directive". The "evaluative" judgement is in the form of "it would be better (best or good enough) to do X"; and the "directive" judgement refers to the judgement in the form of "I ought to (or should) do X".

Then, by labelling the commitment under consideration differently, I do not mean that this commitment is entirely different from what Mele has in mind.

Rather, the aim is to emphasise that the crucial point is that the agent is practically committed to intending or acting in accordance with her practical judgement by virtue of reaching this judgement, regardless of the form of it.

Of course, one might wonder why the agent is required to act (or intend to act) in accordance with her practical judgement, given reaching it. I will turn to this question in the next section and discuss it in more detail. Nonetheless, as a brief answer, the key to the question is “rationality”. Following Broome (2013, p. 135), rationality imposes some constraints on those who are within its “jurisdiction” to act (or intend to act) in a certain way. One of the requirements of rationality, called *Enkrasia*, governs the transition from practical judgement to intention. According to *Enkrasia*, rationality requires of the agent that if she, roughly speaking, makes a practical judgement in favour of taking a certain action, she intends to do the action (Broome, 2013, pp. 170-171). That is why the agent’s practical judgement makes it the case that she, as a rational being, is required to bring her subsequent conduct in line with this judgement.

Although I have discussed reasoning commitment as the commitment involved in the first gap, this does not mean that the agent can never be subject to it in other gaps. Rather, whenever the agent makes a practical judgement in order to bring her subsequent conduct in line with it, she would be subject to reasoning commitment. For instance, the agent might engage in practical reasoning when she is in the second or third gap, the gaps between intending to do a certain action and completing it. In this case, the agent might reason what to do, whether to do or continue doing the intended action. If that is the case, the agent would be subject to reasoning commitment in these gaps.

## II. Executive Commitment

As previously mentioned, the agent might sometimes not be able to reach a practical judgement despite engaging in practical reasoning. Nonetheless, the agent needs to make up her mind what to do, thereby intending to perform a certain action, if she wants to take any action at all. In some other cases, the agent might intend to do a certain action without engaging in practical reasoning. Having intended to take a certain action, the agent would be in the second gap, the gap between intending to do an action and starting doing it.

When the agent intends (resolves or decides) to do a certain action, usually the agent has settled on the intended action in a way such that she has aimed to bring it about. This implies that by intending to do the action, the agent in some sense commits herself to fulfilling it. That is what Mele calls *executive commitment* (2012, p. 16).<sup>55</sup> Further, I take it that when the agent commits herself to accomplishing an action (X), this executive commitment entails a commitment to refraining from doing  $\sim X$ . That is because performing  $\sim X$  causes the agent to fail to fulfil X, the action which she has committed herself to bringing about.

When the agent intends to do an action, she is subject to *executive commitment* as long as she has not yet accomplish the action, given that she maintains her intention to fulfil it. This means the agent is subject to this commitment in the second and third gaps. If the agent withdraws or abandons

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<sup>55</sup> Although it might be controversial, I take “intention”, “resolution” and “decision” interchangeably. John McGuire (2016), for instance, argues against the widely accepted view on the equivalence between “deciding to x” and “intending to x”. He argues for the possibility of cases in which the agent decides to x without intending to x. Nevertheless, for the present purpose, it does not matter whether “deciding to x” is identified with “intending to x” and “resolving to x”. Instead, what is crucial is that deciding, intending or resolving to x, in my view, entails the agent’s commitment to x.

her intention to do the action under consideration either before starting doing the action or before completing it, she would withdraw her *executive commitment*.

### **III. Instrumental Commitment**

Suppose the agent intends to fulfil a certain action (say, X), thereby practically committing herself to bringing it about. In this case, the agent is, as already explained, subject to *executive commitment*. Further assume she knows that the intended action would not be accomplished unless she takes the means to this action. If that is the case, this implies that by being committed to fulfilling the intended action (X), the agent is also somehow committed to taking the means to X, the means necessary for accomplishing X. It is a “necessary means” in a sense that X would not be fulfilled if the agent does not take this means. Then, she is committed to taking this means by virtue of committing herself to accomplishing X. If that is right, it follows that in cases where the agent’s intended action would not be achieved unless she takes the means to this action, the agent’s intention to do the action makes her subject to another commitment that I term *instrumental commitment*.

It is worth noting that in some cases, the agent might be required to take the means to the intended action before initiating the action, that is, when she is in the second gap. In some other cases, the agent might need to take the means of her intended action after embarking on doing the action; that is, when she is in the third gap, given that she still maintains her intention to fulfil the action. If that is right, this means *instrumental commitment* can be involved in the second and third gaps.

#### IV. Summary

It has been clarified that the agent's practical judgement and intention make it the case that she is committed to acting in a certain way, thereby being subject to some practical commitments. More precisely, the agent's practical judgement makes her subject to the *reasoning commitment*. That is, having reached a practical judgement in favour of doing a certain action, the agent is practically committed to taking (or to intending to take) the action. Further, the agent's intention to perform an action makes her subject to the *executive commitment*, the commitment to doing the intended action. In cases where the intended action would not be accomplished unless the agent takes some particular means, the agent is also subject to the *instrumental commitment*, the commitment to taking this means. That is because if she does not take this means, the intended action, which she has been committed to fulfilling, would not be accomplished.

Having introduced three practical commitments involved in the process of action, one may question these practical commitments. That is, it might be asked why the agent is practically committed to bringing her conduct in line with her practical judgement, or fulfilling her intention. Or, why the agent is practically committed to taking the means implied by her intended action, given that she maintains her intention to accomplish this action. To shed light on these questions, I address some requirements of rationality in the next section. My hope is that considering those requirements will provide grounds for explaining the normative force of the practical commitments discussed in this section.

### Section 3. Requirements of Rationality

It is uncontroversial that agents have the capacity of being rational. This means that they are within “the jurisdiction of rationality”.<sup>56</sup> Hence, rationality imposes some constraints on agents. Such constraints might be put in the form of requirements of rationality. Of course, there is some controversy whether any specific principle is genuinely a requirement of rationality.<sup>57</sup> Further, with respect to the requirements of rationality, there is dispute about whether the requirements of rationality are Wide-Scope or Narrow-Scope requirements.<sup>58</sup>

Although the issues mentioned above are interesting and important, it is beyond the scope of the present work to discuss them. As a result, I simply refer to Broome (2013) and take some requirements considered by him as requirements of rationality. There are several reasons for following him. First, his view is highly influential in the literature. Second, he opts for the Wide-Scope formulation of requirements that are widely argued to be superior to the Narrow-Scope one.<sup>59</sup> Finally, he spells out requirements of rationality in a systematic way.

In what follows, I shall sketch Broome’s analysis of some requirements of rationality, more specifically, the requirements that he (2013) terms *Enkrasia*,

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<sup>56</sup> The term is borrowed from Broome (2013, p. 135).

<sup>57</sup> For instance, Broome considers *Persistence of Intention* as one of the requirements of rationality whereas Reisner (2009) and Tenenbaum (2014) deny the *Persistence* requirement(s). Also, there are some requirements formulated by other philosophers, but Broome (2013) does not endorse them as requirements of rationality. For more detail, see Broome (2013).

<sup>58</sup> On the Wide-Scope view, the requirements of rationality are viewed as requirements on states. That is, they are concerned with the relations between the agent’s mental states. By contrast, the requirements of rationality are, on the Narrow-Scope view, taken as requirements on processes. According to the Narrow-Scope view, the requirements of rationality are a matter of how the agent forms or revises her attitudes to have coherent mental states, as rationality requires (Broome, 2013, p. 132; p. 143; Kolodny, 2005, p. 517).

<sup>59</sup> There has been much debate on the best way of formulating requirements of rationality in the literature. For some discussion, see Broome (2007), Fink (2011), Kolodny (2007), Shpall (2013) and Way (2011).

*Persistence of Intention, No Contradictory Intentions and Instrumental Requirement.* The hope is that by understanding these requirements, it will be clear why the agent's practical judgement and intention make it the case that the agent is rationally required to act (or intend to act) in a certain way. This in turn provides grounds for explaining the normative force of the practical commitments considered in the previous section.

It is worth noting that I do not claim the requirements considered in this section are all the requirements of rationality that there are. Nor do I insist that they are the only requirements involved in the process of action. There are other requirement(s), for example, the requirements governing beliefs.<sup>60</sup> I also want to allow that there could be some other rational principles. For instance, I will later (in chapter 7) discuss a Kantian view of reasons; and we will see that the categorical imperative is, for Kant (1998, 4:446-8), “the law of a rational will” (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 154).

Given what is noted above, it would then be a misunderstanding if someone takes it that apart from Broome's four requirements, there are no further requirements of rationality or rational principles either in general or in the process of action. To avoid such a misleading interpretation, I shall label the four requirements that I explain in what follows Requirements\* (with capital R and star).

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<sup>60</sup> For some examples, see Broome (2013).

## I. Enkrasia

One of the requirements of rationality leading us to better understanding of reasoning commitment is what Broome calls *Enkrasia*. He gives the following as its accurate formulation (Broome, 2013, p. 170):

“*Enkrasia*. Rationality requires of *N* that, if

(1) *N* believes at *t* that she herself ought that *p*, and if

(2) *N* believes at *t* that, if she herself were then to intend that *p*, because of that, *p* would be so, and if

(3) *N* believes at *t* that, if she herself were not then to intend that *p*, because of that, *p* would not be so, then

*N* intends at *t* that *p*.”

To get some insight into *Enkrasia* as formulated above, a brief explanation of each condition is in order. Condition (1) implies that the ought involved in *Enkrasia* must be an owned ought ascribed to the agent by herself. That is, the agent takes herself as one to whom the ownership of the ought is attributed by her (2013, p. 22; p. 171).

Condition (2) is intended to exclude cases where the agent believes her intention to *p* would be ineffective in bringing about *p* (Broome, 2013, pp. 24-25; pp. 171-172).

Condition (3) implies *Enkrasia* is not applied to cases where the agent believes her intention to *p* would be redundant. That is, it is not applied to

cases in which the agent believes that  $p$  would occur anyway even if she does not intend that  $p$  (Broome, 2013, p. 171).<sup>61</sup>

To keep things manageable, I assume in all cases of *akrasia* that I am going to discuss in the present work, that the agent meets all three conditions entailed in the accurate formulation of *Enkrasia*; however, she does not intend to do what she believes she ought to do. Then, for the present purposes, it would be sufficient to work with the rough formulation of *Enkrasia* formulated by Broome as follows (2013, p. 22):

“Rationality requires of you that, if you believe that you ought to  $F$ , you intend to  $F$ .”

It is worth noting that the “ought” entailed in *Enkrasia* is, in Broome’s terminology, “unqualified”. In other words, it is an “all-things-considered ought”. That is, the judgement of what the agent ought to do is made in the light of all considerations taken into account by her (Broome, 2013, pp. 25-26). Moreover, it is supposed that there must be some correct connection between the agent’s judgement and intention. That is, the agent’s intending to  $F$  should not occur just by coincidence or in a deviant way, given that she believes she ought to  $F$ . Rather, she intends to  $F$ , for instance, in virtue of believing that she ought to  $F$  (Broome, 2013, p. 73; p. 149).

Given *Enkrasia*, it appears that rationality imposes a constraint on how the agent bridges the gap between a practical judgement and an intention. It, roughly speaking, requires of the agent that if she reaches a practical judgement in favour of taking  $X$ , she will intend to do  $X$ . If that is right, this

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<sup>61</sup> For some concrete examples of three conditions involved in the accurate formulation of *Enkrasia*, see Broome (2013, pp. 22-25; pp. 171-172).

means the agent's practical judgement makes it the case that the agent is required to act in a certain way. That is, it makes her required to intend to do the action which her practical judgement favours. If that is the case, it seems that the rationality requirement of *Enkrasia* can provide an explanation for reasoning commitment, and make it clear why the agent is practically committed to bring her conduct in line with her practical judgement.

## II. Persistence of Intention

One of the requirements that can shed light on executive commitment is what Broome labels *Persistence of Intention*. He formulates it as follows (2013, p. 178):

“*Persistence of Intention*. If  $t_1$  is earlier than  $t_2$ , rationality requires of  $N$  that, if  $N$  intends at  $t_1$  that  $p$ , and no cancelling event occurs between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , then either  $N$  intends at  $t_2$  that  $p$ , or  $N$  considers at  $t_2$  whether  $p$ .”

According to this requirement, the agent is required by rationality to persist in her intention unless some “cancelling event” happens or she considers whether to fulfil her intention. Broome takes “considering whether  $p$ ” broadly in a sense that refers to cases where the agent considers at  $t_2$  whether  $p$  for the first time as well as cases in which she has already considered whether  $p$ , perhaps before intending at  $t_1$  that  $p$  (Broome, 2013, p. 178).

To get some insight into what Broome has in mind by “cancelling event”, a few words are in order.

## Cancelling event

Broome introduces three types of cancelling event while admitting that this is not an exhaustive list. The first type is to consider whether to  $p$ . By engaging in considering whether  $p$ , the agent might at least temporarily withdraw her intention to  $p$ ; she might do so at least as long as she is considering. Alternatively, she might permanently cease her intention as a result of considering it. In such cases, the agent would not violate *Persistence of Intention* despite dropping her intention.<sup>62</sup>

The second type of cancelling event is, for Broome, to fulfil what the agent intends to do. When the agent comes to believe that the object of her intention has been brought about, she typically drops the intention in question.

The third type of event, licensing the agent to cease her intention, is to come to believe that she cannot fulfil her intention (Broome, 2013, pp. 180-181). To take a simple example, the agent intends to visit her friend this weekend; however, she later understands her friend will be away this weekend. In this case, the agent would not violate *Persistence of Intention* when she drops her intention due to coming to believe that it cannot be carried out.

Given *Persistence of Intention*, the agent is required by rationality that if she intends to perform an action, she will persist in her intention unless something licensing her to drop the intention happens. That is to say, by intending to do the action under consideration, she, as a rational agent, is required to maintain

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<sup>62</sup> Taking “considering whether  $p$ ” as a kind of cancelling event raises the question why Broome both explicitly mentions the phrase “considering whether  $p$ ” as a disjunct in the consequent of the conditional in *Persistence of Intention* and also takes it as a kind of cancelling event. In other words, why does he not include it in the formulation of *Persistence of Intention* just once, either as a disjunct in the consequent of the conditional in *Persistence of Intention* or as a sort of cancelling event? I leave this question open.

her intention till the time of action arrives, given that nothing intervenes.<sup>63</sup> In this case, having realised it is the time of action, the agent acts or at least tries to act on her intention, thereby at least trying to accomplish the object of her intention. If that is the case, this implies that when the agent intends to fulfil a certain action, she is practically committed to following through her intention, given that nothing intervenes. That is, the agent's intention makes it the case that she is committed to acting in a certain way. This means the agent's intention makes her subject to executive commitment.

In addition to *Persistence of Intention*, there is also the requirement of *No Contradictory Intentions* that gives us some insight into executive commitment. In what follows, I shall explain it.

### **III. No Contradictory Intentions**

The requirement of *No Contradictory Intentions* tells us that “rationality requires of *N* that *N* does not intend at *t* that *p* and also intend at *t* that not *p*” (Broome, 2013, p. 156).

One might wonder whether it is really possible for the agent to have contradictory intentions. Here is Broome's example of how it might be possible. Suppose the agent intends to be in London next Monday to attend a conference. Later, she is informed that the tube workers will be on strike next Monday. Then, she intends not to be in London that day while forgetting that the conference, which she has intended to attend, is next Monday too. That is, it does not come to her notice that both events are on the same day. In this case,

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<sup>63</sup> I take “nothing intervenes” in a broad sense which includes nothing preventing the agent from doing the intended action (X) and no cancelling event happening; nor does she consider whether to do X at a time between intending at the earlier time to perform X and fulfilling X at the later time.

the agent has two contradictory intentions at least until she realises that both the conference and the tube strike are on the same day (Broome, 2013, p. 156).<sup>64</sup>

In response, it might be acknowledged that as long as the agent does not realise that these two events coincide with each other, it may be possible for her to have two contradictory intentions. That is, such an inconsistency may occur in the absence of the agent's consciousness or awareness. Nevertheless, it might be psychologically impossible to have two inconsistent intentions when the agent realises such a contradiction.

To this claim, Broome replies in the following way. Even if it were true that the typical agent is so designed that it is unlikely she has inconsistent intentions, it would not undermine the fact that rationality requires the agent not to have contradictory intentions. That is, it is still plausible to take *No Contradictory Intentions* as a requirement of rationality (Broome, 2013, p. 156).

According to *No Contradictory Intentions*, the agent is rationally required, when she intends to take a certain course of action (say, X), that she does not intend to do the opposed action ( $\sim X$ ). Practically speaking, this implies that when the agent commits herself to taking X by intending to do it, she as a rational being is also practically committed not to doing  $\sim X$ . In other words, by

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<sup>64</sup> When the agent has contradictory intentions, each of these intentions, according to Broome, entails a number of dispositions each of which may be manifested in the agent's action. Looking back on Broome's example of London, while the agent is not aware that both events coincide, she may be disposed to book a hotel room in London for next Monday, and also buy a ticket to Melbourne to attend a full day's event which is on the same day (Broome, 2013, p. 86; p. 156). If that is the case, I take it that if the agent intends to  $p$ , and if her action manifests what entails  $\sim p$ , this implies that she simultaneously has contradictory intentions, given that she still maintains her intention to  $p$ .

intending to do  $X$ , the agent commits herself to acting in a certain way, that is, refraining from doing  $\sim X$ . This commitment is what has been termed executive commitment. If that is right, it then appears that *No Contradictory Intentions* provide us with some justification for executive commitment.

#### IV. Instrumental Requirement

The requirement of rationality that I take to correspond to instrumental commitment is called *Instrumental Requirement*. Broome offers the following as its formulation (2013, p. 169):

*“Instrumental Requirement.* Rationality requires of  $N$  that, if

- (1)  $N$  intends at  $t$  that  $e$ , and if
- (2)  $N$  believes at  $t$  that  $m$  is a means implied by  $e$ , and if
- (3)  $N$  believes at  $t$  that  $m$  is up to her herself then, then
- (4)  $N$  intends at  $t$  that  $m$ .”<sup>65</sup>

What Broome has in mind by “the means implied by  $e$ ” is a means that the agent believes if she does not intend to take, because of that the intended end would not be fulfilled (2013, pp. 160-161).

Further, it is worth mentioning that condition (3) rules out cases in which the agent believes that the means implied by her intended end would be realised anyway, even though she does not intend this means. To take an example, suppose that the agent intends to do some exercise in the morning before going to work. Further, she believes that she would not be able to do so

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<sup>65</sup> “ $e$ ” and “ $m$ ” refer to “end” and “means” respectively.

unless she gets up at 6 a.m. In other words, she believes getting up at 6 a.m. is a means implied by her intended end. However, she knows that she wakes up at 6 a.m. anyway. That is because she has a hearing-impaired neighbour whose daily habit is to watch the news in high volume at 6 in the morning. As a result, she automatically wakes up at 6 because of the high volume of her neighbour's TV.<sup>66</sup> In this case, the agent would not violate *Instrumental Requirement* even if she does not intend to wake up at 6 a.m. (Broome, 2013, p. 162).

We have considered that the agent is, according to *Instrumental Requirement*, required by rationality that if she intends to achieve an end (*e*), and if she believes that if she does not intend to take the means implied by her intended end (*m*), because of that she will fail to achieve *e*, then she intends to take *m*. If so, this implies that in cases where the agent is committed to performing a certain action by intending to do the action, she is also practically committed to taking the means of intended action, the means without taking which the intended action would not be accomplished. This sort of commitment is what I term *instrumental commitment* for which *Instrumental Requirement* of rationality provides some justification.

## V. Summary

The purpose of this section has been to sketch some requirements of rationality that give us better understanding of the agent's practical commitment(s) involved in the process of action. To this end, I have referred to Broome (2013) and considered four requirements: *Enkrasia*, *Persistence of Intention*, *No Contradictory Intentions* and *Instrumental Requirement*.

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<sup>66</sup> Put aside the possibility that her neighbour might not, for some reason, watch the news at 6 a.m. any more.

Explaining these Requirements\* has made it clear that there is a close relation between these Requirements\* and practical commitments. This has in turn given us some insight into why the agent's practical judgement and intention make it the case that the agent is practically committed to acting in a certain way. It is worth emphasising that Requirements\* of rationality are not, in my view, the same as practical commitments; rather, they explain the normative force of practical commitments. In other words, they play a role in clarifying why the agent is committed to acting in a certain way in virtue of her practical judgement and intention. However, they do not, on my picture, tell us the whole story about the normative force of practical commitments. As I will explain in the next section, the normative force of practical commitments is overridden by a good enough (or sufficiently weighty) normative reason.

So far I have elaborated some of the chief components of the proposed account of weakness of will. In the next section, I spell out some key features of this view.

#### **Section 4. Some Essential Features of the Proposed Account of Weakness of Will**

This section aims to highlight some essential characteristics of the proposed account of weakness of will. Doing so will help us to gain a clearer picture of this account, thereby preventing some confusion between this view and two rival ones that I will discuss in the next chapter.

The agent, on my view, manifests weakness of will when she withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. This account has the following distinctive features.

First, it is based on the idea of practical commitments that I take to be different from Requirements\* of rationality. Second, it takes the agent's practical reason into account. Further, a good enough normative reason overrides the normative force of practical commitments.

In the rest of the present section, I first try to show why it is crucial to draw a line between practical commitments and Requirements\* of rationality. Then, I shall illustrate the importance of taking account of the agent's practical reason in determining whether a given case is a case of weakness of will. Finally, I will explain how I see the relation between "practical commitments", "Requirements\* of rationality" and "good enough normative reasons".

### **I. Practical Commitments and Requirements\* of Rationality**

As previously mentioned, practical commitments are, in my view, related to Requirements\* of rationality in a way such that Requirements\* of rationality provide grounds for explaining the normative force of practical commitments. Nonetheless, these Requirements\* are not identified with practical commitments. As a result, it is quite possible that in some cases, the agent does not violate a Requirement\* to which she is subject, but (say) withdraws her practical commitment. To clarify, take a case where the agent abandons her prior intention due to some cancelling event happening. In this case, she would not violate *Persistence of Intention* although she would withdraw (or abandon) her *executive commitment*. If so, it then appears that it is not always the case that complying with a given Requirement\* of rationality results in satisfying the practical commitment to which the agent is subject. Rather, there are cases where the agent might conform to a given Requirement\* to which she is

subject; however, she (say) withdraws her practical commitment in acting as she does. This indicates that we should draw a line between Requirements\* of rationality and practical commitments despite their being connected with each other.

It is worth highlighting that this distinction is important for the proposed account of weakness of will. To see why, consider a case where the agent intends to stay in and study this afternoon for an exam tomorrow. However, her friend suggests going down to the pub for a drink this afternoon. This suggestion triggers a desire for drink, thereby making her tempted to go to the pub. Having succumbed to this temptation, she then abandons her original intention, and goes for a drink in the afternoon. In this case, her friend's suggestion can be treated as a cancelling event, given that the agent did not anticipate this suggestion at the time of forming her original intention. If that is the case, this means that the agent abandons her original intention while some cancelling event occurs. Hence she does not violate *Persistence of Intention*. Nonetheless, she abandons (or revises, if you like) her executive commitment in acting as she does, the commitment made by her intention to stay in and study. In this case, the agent's desire to drink leads her to abandon her prior intention and go to the pub. That is, the reason for which she acts as she does is her desire. For the sake of argument, take it for granted that this reason is not good enough, in a normative sense, to justify her action. This means that the agent, on my picture, manifests weakness of will since she abandons (or revises) her executive commitment without a good enough normative reason. Nonetheless, she does not violate the Requirement\* to which she is subject, namely, *Persistence of Intention*. Then, if one wishes to account for weakness

of will in terms of the violation of Requirements\* of rationality, the drinker case would not, on this picture, be a case of weakness of will. That is because the agent complies with the Requirement\* to which she is subject.

It then follows that whether we account for weakness of will in terms of (say) withdrawing practical commitments or violating Requirements\* of rationality, it has different implication for cases. This in turn makes it clear why it is crucial for my account to be strict about the distinction between Requirements\* of rationality and practical commitments.

Having spotlighted the first characteristic of my account, discussion of the second feature is in order.

## **II. Practical Reasons**

The second distinctive feature of the proposed account is to take account of “practical reason”, that is, the reason for acting. On my view, not every case in which the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment would be a case of weakness of will. Rather, the agent would display weakness of will in doing so if she acts as she does without a good enough normative reason.

To see why it is crucial to take the agent’s practical reason into account, consider two versions of a case where the agent intends to work on her project at the weekend. On the first version, the agent’s friend calls her to suggest that they go away at the weekend. This suggestion triggers a temptation to go away. This in turn leads the agent to abandon her prior intention and proceed to act as she has been tempted. In this case, the agent abandons her executive commitment merely due to being tempted to do the action (namely, going

away) opposite to the one which she had committed herself to taking (namely, working on her project).<sup>67</sup>

In the second scenario, the agent does not work on her project at the weekend. That is because her father injures himself on Friday so badly that he needs someone to look after him for a couple of days. Since there is no one to do so except the agent, she abandons her prior intention, and proceeds to look after her father at the weekend.

In both cases, the agent abandons her executive commitment in acting as she does. Nonetheless, we may be inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent in the first scenario, but not in the second one. That is, when the agent abandons her executive commitment just because of temptation, all other things being equal, she intuitively seems to exhibit weakness of will. By contrast, the agent does not intuitively show weakness of will in the second version despite abandoning her executive commitment.

If our intuitions about these two scenarios are on the right track, it then appears that the agent's withdrawal of practical commitment is not by itself sufficient to account for weakness of will. Rather, there are other factor(s) playing a role in determining whether a given case of abandoning a practical commitment is a case of weakness of will. Then, the question is what makes these two cases, mentioned above, different in terms of whether they are cases of weakness of will. More precisely, the question is why we have been inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent in the first scenario, but not in the second one although she acts in the same way in both cases.

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<sup>67</sup> They are supposed to be opposite courses of action in a sense that the agent cannot simultaneously do both.

It is worth noting that we cannot, in my view, answer this question in terms of violating a Requirement\* of rationality to which the agent is subject. To clarify why, the agent's intention at  $t_1$  to work at the weekend ( $t_2$ ) makes her subject to the Requirement\* of *Persistence of Intention*. According to this Requirement\*, the agent is required to intend at the weekend ( $t_2$ ) to work on her project, given her prior intention at  $t_1$ ; where it is assumed that this intention in turn leads her to in effect work at the weekend ( $t_2$ ). When the agent does not work on her project at the weekend ( $t_2$ ), this means she does not intend at  $t_2$  to do so. If that is right, we can consider several possibilities when the agent does not intend at  $t_2$  to work.

First, we might view her friend's call and her father's injury as some cancelling events happening in the first and second scenarios respectively. This implies that in both cases, the agent drops her prior intention to work at the weekend as a result of some cancelling event occurring. If that is the case, the agent violates *Persistence of Intention* neither in the first scenario nor in the second one. Rather, she conforms to it in both cases.

The second possibility is to take it that no cancelling event occurs in either case. That is, one might treat neither her friend's call nor her father's injury as cancelling events. In this case, the agent violates *Persistence of Intention* in both cases where she does not intend at the weekend ( $t_2$ ) to work, given her prior intention at  $t_1$ .

Regardless of whether the first and the second possibilities are plausible, neither can, as far as I can see, make sense of our intuitions about the two scenarios described earlier. To clarify why, note that according to the first

possibility, the agent does not violate *Persistence of Intention* in either case. By contrast, according to the second possibility, she violates *Persistence of Intention* in both cases. That is, given the two above possibilities, the agent acts in the same way in terms of whether or not she violates Requirements\* to which she is subject. Nonetheless, the agent intuitively seems to manifest weakness of will in the first scenario, but not in the second one. If that is the case, it then appears that the two above possibilities cannot provide us with any explanation as to why the two versions are different in terms of whether they are cases of weakness of will.

As the third possibility, one might claim that no cancelling event occurs in the first case where the agent's friend calls her to suggest going away at the weekend. Alternatively, (s)he might claim such an event is not sufficient to be taken as a cancelling event. This means the agent violates the Requirement\* of *Persistence of Intention* in the first scenario since she does not intend at  $t_2$  to work, given her prior intention. By contrast, the second case where the agent's father is injured might be viewed as a case in which a cancelling event happens. This means when the agent does not intend at  $t_2$  to work on her project, she does not violate *Persistence of Intention*. Rather, she complies with it due to dropping her prior intention as a result of a cancelling event occurring.

On this reading, it sounds as if we can make sense of our intuitions about whether the two cases under consideration are cases of weakness of will in terms of the violation of Requirements\* of rationality. On the first occasion, the agent shows weakness of will since she, on the present interpretation, violates a Requirement\* to which she is subject. By contrast, the second case is

not a case of weakness of will since the agent acts in a way that conforms to this Requirement\*.

However, this interpretation is not convincing. That is because it is hard to see why the agent's father's injury is taken to be a cancelling event, but not the agent's friend's suggestion, given that the agent predicts neither at  $t_1$ , that is, when she intends to work at the weekend. Consequently, the third possibility does not seem to me persuasive. Given the failure of all three possibilities, I am then inclined to take it that the violation of Requirements\* of rationality cannot plausibly account for why the two cases under consideration are different in terms of whether they are cases of weakness of will.

Having indicated that the violation of Requirements\* of rationality fails to convincingly make sense of these two cases, one possible explanation as to why we have been inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent in the first scenario, but not in the second one, can, in my view, be offered by referring to the agent's practical reason. In the first scenario where temptation leads the agent to withdraw her executive commitment while all other things are equal, I take it that she acts as she does without a good enough normative reason. By contrast, I deem that she has a good enough normative reason to abandon her executive commitment in the second case where her father is injured. That is, her reason for acting as she does is good enough, in a normative sense, to justify her action.

If that is right, it follows that the agent's practical reason plays a crucial role in determining whether or not the agent exhibits weakness of will in withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) her practical

commitment(s). If so, this makes clear the importance of taking account of practical reason, as the second distinctive feature of the proposed view.

Further, I consider the fact that (say) the withdrawal of practical commitments is not by itself sufficient to count a case as weakness of will, to be an advantage of the proposed account. That is because it provides the agent with grounds for changing her mind when it is reasonable to do so without being accused of weakness of will. It is, in my view, crucial for any account of weakness of will to allow for such a possibility. That is because circumstances may at least sometimes change in a way that it makes changing one's mind appropriate. In such cases, if the agent changes her mind, and (say) withdraws her practical commitment(s) with a good enough normative reason, she would not, on my picture, be charged with manifesting weakness of will.

Having spelled out some essential features of the proposed account, I shall clarify the relation between "practical commitments", "Requirements\* of rationality" and "good enough normative reasons".

### **III. The Relation between "Practical Commitments", "Requirements\* of Rationality" and "Good Enough Normative Reasons"**

On the one hand, I have discussed that the agent's practical judgement and intention make her subject to what are termed "practical commitments". That is, the agent is practically committed to acting in a certain way by virtue of her practical judgement and intention. This means practical commitments, as I see them, entail some normative force for bringing the agent's conduct into line with her practical judgement and intention. To explain where the normative force of practical commitments issues from, I have appealed to Requirements\*

of rationality. On the other hand, I have suggested that the agent's practical commitments can be (say) withdrawn (or abandoned) if the agent has a good enough normative reason for doing so without being accused of showing weakness of will. This implies that the normative force of practical commitments is allowed to be overridden by good enough normative reasons, within my proposed framework. Then, the question is how this can be the case, given that practical commitments, in my view, have some normative force for controlling the agent's conduct, the normative force derived from Requirements\* of rationality.

In response to this question, Requirements\* of rationality do not tell us the whole story of what the agent ought to do. Rather, they, on my picture, provide part of the explanation of how the agent ought to act. Surely, it is not acceptable to claim that when the agent is practically committed to acting in a certain way, she ought to go ahead and act in accord with it, regardless of anything else. That is partly because circumstances may sometimes change so that it will be reasonable (or appropriate) for the agent to (say) withdraw (or abandon) her practical commitment(s) and act differently from what the agent is practically committed to doing.

To allow for cases where it is reasonable for the agent to (say) withdraw (or abandon) her practical commitment(s), I have introduced the notion of "good enough normative reason" into the picture. On this view, "good enough normative reasons" outweigh the normative force of practical commitments issued from Requirements\* of rationality. This implies that Requirements\* of rationality and "good enough normative reasons" are, on my proposed picture, two distinct contributors to the whole story about the normative force of

practical commitments. Although Requirements\* of rationality make it clear why practical commitments have normative force for bringing the agent's conduct into line with her practical judgement and intention, "good enough normative reasons" as a distinct source of normativity override the normative force of practical commitments derived from Requirements\* of rationality. This means that when the agent has a good enough normative reason to act differently from that to which she is practically committed, she is, on my proposed view, allowed to (say) withdraw (or abandon) her practical commitment(s) and to act in accord with what she has a "good enough normative reason" for, without being charged for exhibiting weakness of will.

It is worth noting that this proposed picture of the relation between "practical commitments", "Requirements\* of rationality" and "good enough normative reasons" is not the only possible picture to explain the normative force of practical commitments, given that they have such normative force. Another way to picture the relation between these elements is to say Requirements\* of rationality and "reasons" are not two distinct sources of normativity. Rather, Requirements\* of rationality may themselves take account of what reasons the agent has. This would mean that Requirements\* of rationality, properly understood, would incorporate some exception clauses governing what to do in the exceptional cases where, for instance, circumstances change; and these exception clauses built into the Requirements\* of rationality would be to do with the operation of "good enough normative reasons". This would imply that when the agent (say) withdraws (or abandons) her practical commitment with a good enough normative reason, it is not, on this view, the case that the normative force of

her practical commitment is overridden by this good enough normative reason. Instead, the Requirement\* of rationality from which the normative force of the agent's practical commitment issues, properly speaking, includes some exception clause(s) allowing the agent to act as she does, the clause(s) governed by the agent's good enough normative reason.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss which way of handling exceptional cases is better or more appropriate. There could be good reasons for going one way or another; however, I simply adopt the first picture on which "Requirements\* of rationality" and "good enough normative reasons" are taken to be two distinct contributors to the story of the normative force of practical commitments.

#### **IV. Summary**

This section has aimed to spotlight some features of the proposed account. First, it is based on practical commitments taken to be different from Requirements\* of rationality although there is some connection between them. The second characteristic is to take the agent's practical reasons into account. I have also tried to show the importance of these features. More precisely, I have illustrated why it matters to draw a distinction between practical commitments and Requirements\* of rationality and why it is crucial to take account of the agent's practical reason. As regards the relation between "practical commitments", "Requirements\* of rationality" and "good enough normative reasons", I have explained that practical commitments have normative force for bringing the agent's conduct in line with her practical judgement and intention, the normative force derived from Requirements\* of rationality. However, this

normative force is, on my picture, outweighed by a good enough normative reason.

Having highlighted some characteristics of the proposed account of weakness of will, I address some implications of this account, and also deal with some questions in the next section.

### **Section 5. Some Implications and Questions Arising from the Proposed Account**

According to the proposed account, the agent exhibits weakness of will when she withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitments without a good enough normative reason; where these practical commitments are those involved in the process of action. Further, it has been clarified that we can consider three gaps in the process of action. Then, I have explained that the agent may be subject to one or more practical commitments and Requirements\* of rationality in each gap. Taken together, it then follows that weakness of will, as I understand it, can arise in each gap.

This view of weakness of will seems to have some interesting implications. In addition, the proposed account or its implications may raise some questions. This section is designed to address some implications of the proposed account and deal with some possible questions.

- The proposed account seems to imply that *akrasia*, in its strict (or narrow) sense referring to judgement-violation, does not equate to weakness of will, as I conceive it, although there is some overlap between them. To clarify this implication, weakness of will is traditionally understood in terms of violating the Requirement\* of *Enkrasia* or, as Mele puts it, *evaluative*

*commitment* (Mele, 2012, p. 16); where evaluative commitment is covered by reasoning commitment, in my terminology. On the traditional picture, all cases where the agent acts against her practical judgement would be cases of weakness of will, no matter whether she has a good enough normative reason for acting as she does.

If that is right, this implies that not every case of akrasia would be a case of weakness of will, as I understand it. That is because the agent would, on my view, manifest weakness of will when she (say) acts against her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason; where practical commitments entail reasoning commitment. This means that there could be cases of akrasia, as traditionally conceived, although they may not be cases of weakness of will, as I take it: these would be cases where the agent acts contrary to her reasoning commitment, but with a good enough normative reason.<sup>68</sup> Further, given that the notion of “practical commitment” includes not only reasoning commitment but also executive and instrumental ones, this means that not every case of weakness of will, as I conceive it, is a case of akrasia. Taken together, this suggests that we should, on my picture, draw a distinction between akrasia and weakness of will; nonetheless, there is an overlap between them; where by “overlap” I mean the following. Some cases of akrasia (in its narrow sense) are also cases of weakness of will, as I conceive it; however, there are cases of akrasia that are not, for me, cases of weakness of will, and cases of weakness of will that are not cases of akrasia.

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<sup>68</sup> In the next chapter (section 2), I will offer an example, labelled *False Testimony*, in which the agent acts against her all-things-considered judgement. She acts as she does out of morality. In this case, I take it that the reason for which she acts as she does is a good enough normative reason justifying her action. As a result, she does not, on my view, show weakness of will although she acts akratically.

It is worth highlighting that this implication differs from Holton's view about the connection between akrasia and weakness of will, the view he defends in his book *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* (2009). Although Holton refuses the identification of akrasia and weakness of will, he does not take akrasia as one sort of case of weakness of will. Nor does his account of weakness of will have an interest in the violation of practical judgement.

This implication of the proposed account concerning the relation between akrasia and weakness of will is also different from Mele's idea, mentioned in chapter 3, in the following way. Unlike the proposed account, Mele (2012, pp. 14-16) equates akrasia with weakness of will while expanding the notion of akrasia to cover cases of intention-violation as well as judgement-violation. This implies that every akratic action is, on Mele's picture, a weak-willed one, and vice versa; where akrasia is not, on this view, used in its strict (or narrow) sense referring to only cases of judgement-violation.

- Regarding this implication of the proposed account that in cases of akrasia, the agent does not display weakness of will if she acts as she does for a good enough normative reason, a question arises. One may wonder whether the proposed account would allow cases of so-called *inverse akrasia*. The alleged inverse akrasia is described as a case where the agent acts against her practical judgement; however, in doing so, she takes the right course of action. That is, she performs an action that there is a good enough normative reason for her to do (Arpaly and Schroeder, 1999, pp. 161-162; Kleist, 2009, p. 257).

Cases of inverse akrasia are standardly viewed as cases of weakness of will, as traditionally conceived. That is because the agent acts against her practical

judgement, after all; and this is enough to make it a case of weakness of will in the traditional sense. If that is the case, it sounds as if my proposed account would imply that cases of inverse akrasia are impossible in the sense that they are not cases of weakness of will, as I understand it. That is because in cases of alleged inverse akrasia, the agent, as previously mentioned, performs an action that there is a good enough normative reason for her to do. Thus, the agent would not, on the proposed account, display weakness of will despite acting against her reasoning commitment.

In response: inverse akrasia, as far as I can see, will fit into the proposed account as a case of weakness of will. To see how, it has been earlier mentioned that by “without a good enough normative reason”, I mean that what motivates the agent to act as she does is not good enough in a normative sense. If so, it is then quite possible that the agent’s reason for which she acts as she does (her motivating reason) would sometimes not be the same as the (normative) reason that there is for the agent to perform the action she does. If that is the case, this implies that the agent may sometimes be led to take an action against her reasoning commitment by a reason that is not a good enough reason in a normative sense although there is a good enough normative reason for the agent to perform the action she does.

In this case, the agent would, on the proposed account, manifest weakness of will since she acts against her practical commitment while the reason for which she acts as she does is not a good enough reason in a normative sense. Nevertheless, the agent takes the right course of action in acting as she does. It is the right action in the sense that there is a good enough normative reason for doing it, the reason justifying this action. Then, it would be a case of inverse

akrasia. Consequently, it is not the case that the proposed account does not allow the possibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will.

To illustrate this point, consider the well-known example of Huckleberry Finn. I will later (in chapter 7) explain and discuss the Huck example in more detail. However, for present purposes, a brief description of this case is in order.

Huckleberry Finn lives in a society where black people are regarded as slaves who are owned. He comes across Jim, who is a runaway slave. Huck judges that he ought to return Jim to his owner. Nonetheless, he does not do so; instead, he helps Jim as a human to be free from slavery. This case is standardly taken as a case of inverse akrasia since Huck acts against his practical judgement. However, in doing so he takes the right course of action.

According to a common reading, Huck acts as he does because of his emotions. That is, his emotion of (say) sympathy for Jim leads him to act against his judgement and help Jim to be free (Bennett, 1974, pp. 123-127). This means his reason for acting as he does is his emotions. If so, I take it that this reason is not good enough in a normative sense.<sup>69</sup> Then, Huck acts against his reasoning commitment without a good enough normative reason, thereby showing weakness of will, as I understand it. He manifests weakness of will although he takes the right course of action, which is to help Jim as a human to be free. Having indicated the possibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will within the proposed framework, the next issue arises with regard to Holton's view.

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<sup>69</sup> It may be controversial whether Huck's emotions provide him with a good enough normative reason. Nonetheless, I do not regard Huck's acting on his emotions as an action done for a good enough normative reason.

- With respect to Holton's understanding of weakness of will, it is obvious that my proposed account takes the notion of weakness of will to be broader than he does. That is at least because some cases of akrasia would, on my picture, be cases of weakness of will whereas Holton argues that weakness of will has nothing to do with acting against practical judgement.

One might wonder whether all cases that Holton (2009) counts as cases of weakness of will would, on my proposed account, be cases of weakness of will. In response, it depends on whether cases that Holton deems to be cases of "over-ready" revision of a resolution would, for me, be cases of revising a practical commitment without a "good enough normative reason". However, Holton does not provide an exhaustive list of circumstances in which the agent's resolution-revision would be a case of "over-ready revision". Thus, I am not in a position to decisively say whether all cases that Holton (2009) takes as "over-ready" revision of a resolution" would, on my picture, be cases where the agent revises her practical commitment without "a good enough normative reason".

- A further question is the following. In chapter 3, I have mentioned that I would follow the line of thought offered by Mele (2012) in order to account for weakness of will. If so, one might wonder how my proposed account differs from Mele's idea about weakness of will, in addition to the difference in seeing the relation between akrasia and weakness of will explained earlier in this section.

In response, although the proposed view has been inspired by Mele's suggestion, it goes beyond his account in several respects. First, Mele's

conception of practical commitment is narrower than mine. That is because what he has in mind by “practical commitments” refers to evaluative and executive commitments while, on my picture, practical commitments at least explicitly include instrumental commitments as well as reasoning and executive ones. This implies that my account at least explicitly takes (say) the withdrawal of instrumental commitment without a good enough normative reason as a case of weakness of will. Second, Mele does not spell out why the agent is practically committed to acting in a certain way, whereas I have elaborated this issue by referring to Requirements\* of rationality. That is I have argued that practical commitments derive their normative force from Requirements\* of rationality. Thirdly, Mele does not at least explicitly discuss whether he considers any role for the agent’s practical reason in his account of weakness of will. By contrast, I have explicitly argued that not every case of (say) withdrawing a practical commitment is a case of weakness of will; rather, it rests on the agent’s practical reason. If the agent (say) withdraws her practical commitment(s) with a good enough normative reason, it would not, on my view, be a case of weakness of will. In addition, Mele, as mentioned in chapter 3, equates akrasia with weakness of will. Then, he tries to account for akratic (or weak-willed) action in a way that captures cases of judgement-violation and intention-violation as cases of akrasia (or weakness of will). In contrast to Mele, I have not, as explained earlier in this section, identified akrasia with weakness of will although there is, on my picture, overlap between them.

- One might raise the following question. (S)he might wonder whether all cases of weakness of will are involved in the process of action. Moreover, it

might be questioned whether we can account for all cases of weakness of will in terms of withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) practical commitments without a good enough normative reason. In other words, the question is whether it is the case that the only way to get weakness of will is to withdraw (abandon, revise or act against) practical commitments without a good enough normative reason.

In response, weakness of will is generally discussed in the practical sphere. That is, it is considered as a matter of action, where by “action” I mean “non-mental” action. Nonetheless, some philosophers might be inclined to extend it beyond the practical domain such that it includes belief as well. For instance, Mele, in *Irrationality* (1987), argues for the possibility of akratic (incontinent) belief.<sup>70</sup> Given that he identifies akrasia (incontinence) with weakness of will, the akratic believer, on his view, shows weakness of will in believing akratically.

My aim is not to argue for or against Mele’s idea on the existence of akratic belief. Rather, the point I would like to make is that not all philosophers limit themselves to the practical sphere in their discussion of weakness of will. However, my focus has been on the practical domain. Since I have not investigated weakness of will in the doxastic realm, I do not claim that all cases of weakness of will are involved in the process of intentional action in the way that I have discussed.

Putting aside the doxastic sphere, the question still remains of whether all cases of weakness of will would be cases in which the agent withdraws

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<sup>70</sup> It is worth noting that while holding that there is an overlap between akratic believing and self-deception, Mele makes a distinction between them (Mele, 1987, p. 118).

(abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. In response, it is, in my view, a reasonable hypothesis that every case where we are inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent is a case in which she withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. This is the view that I am defending in this thesis; and so far I have not found any case to indicate there are other way of displaying weakness of will. Nevertheless, I am open to the possibility that this view may need to be modified in future if some counterexample comes up.

It is worth noting that some might be inclined to take the notion of weakness of will more narrowly than I have done. They might wish to classify all cases that I have viewed as cases of weakness of will into different categories. If so, I must, in reaction to them, admit that I do not have any compelling philosophical argument that the concept of weakness of will should be considered as broadly as I have done.

Nevertheless, it is worth calling attention to the following. I have, as mentioned in chapter 1 (Introduction), assumed that the purpose of a philosophical theory of weakness of will is at least in part to elaborate in a coherent way what common sense considers to be weakness of will. To provide an account of weakness of will which serves this purpose, I have followed my intuition about whether the agent shows weakness of will in acting as she does. This has led me to the proposal that weakness of will arises when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. Then, if we seek for an account of weakness of will that can make sense of common-sense attribution of weakness

of will to various cases, narrowing the notion of weakness of will such that it covers either cases of judgement-violation or cases of intention-violation may result in failing to account for what common sense treats as weakness of will.

To back up my proposed account and show that the intuitions to which I have appealed are to some extent representative, I shall briefly sketch some empirical work done by May and Holton (2012).

In one experiment, they design four different cases in each of which 25 participants between the ages of 18 and 24 years are involved. In the first case, the agent resolves to go on a diet subsequent to her judgement that it is best to do so, all-things-considered. She then acts as she resolves. Nonetheless, she later succumbs to the temptation to eat doughnuts, thereby violating her resolution. In doing so, the agent violates not only her resolution but also her judgement, given that she maintains her original judgement in favour of being on a diet. Participants are asked to what extent (on a Likert scale) they agree or disagree that the agent manifests weakness of will in eating doughnuts. In this case, 74% agree (May and Holton, 2012, p. 347; p. 349).

In the second case, while judging it to be best, all-things-considered, not to embark on an affair, the agent akratically resolves to have the affair. She then proceeds to fulfil her resolution. In this case, the agent violates her judgement, but not her resolution. Respondents are asked to show the degree of their agreement or disagreement with the claim that the agent exhibits weakness of will in taking the akratically resolved action, namely, having the affair. The results indicate that 50% agree, 33% disagree and 17% of participants are “ambivalent” (May and Holton, 2012, pp. 348-349).

In the third one, the agent, who has promised her mother to refrain from playing football, judges it would be best not to play football, all-things-considered. However, she akratically resolves to play. When the time of playing comes, the agent loses her nerve, thereby failing to play. She fails to act on her resolution due to losing her nerve, but not owing to the judgement under consideration. In this case, when the agent fails to act on her akratic resolution,<sup>71</sup> we have resolution-violation, but not judgement-violation. May and Holton ask subjects to what degree they agree or disagree that the agent exhibits weakness of will in failing to play football. In this case, 50% and 27% of respondents agree and disagree respectively; and 23% are “ambivalent” (2012, pp. 348-349).

The fourth case represents the agent who acts in a way that she violates neither her all-things-considered judgement nor her resolution. She judges it to be best to have coitus, all-things-considered; and she resolves to do so. She then proceeds and fulfils her resolution. Participants are asked to show the extent of their agreement or disagreement with the claim that the agent displays weakness of will in having sexual intercourse. In this case, 63% disagree (2012, pp. 348-349).

According to May and Holton, these results show that both judgement-violation and resolution-violation affect subjects’ verdict on whether the agent shows weakness of will in a given case. Participants are more inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent when she violates either her judgement or resolution (or both). Nonetheless, the fact that some participants are

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<sup>71</sup> An “akratic resolution” to do X refers to a resolution that the agent forms in favour of taking X while judging it would be better (or best) not to perform X, all-things-considered.

ambivalent in the second and third cases, according to May and Holton, suggests that while judgement-violation or resolution-violation plays a necessary role, neither is in itself sufficient. Other features of a given case also play an important role in attributing weakness of will to the agent (2012, pp. 348-350).

In another study, they design four cases in each of which 30 participants between the ages of 18 and 24 are involved. These cases differ in terms of resolution-valence (either neutral or bad) and action valence (either neutral or bad). In each scenario, the agent either resolves to read a French text (neutral) or a Nazi text (bad). Nonetheless, she later abandons her resolution and goes with her friends to either eat out and watch a movie (neutral) or drink too much and pick a fight (bad) (2012, pp. 353-354).

In the first scenario, the agent resolves to stay in and read some French literature. However, her friends later call her to suggest eating out and watching a movie (2012, p. 354).

In the second one, she resolves to stay in and read some French literature. However, her friends later call her to suggest going for a drink and picking a fight after getting drunk (2012, p. 354).

In the third one, the agent resolves to stay in and read some Nazi literature. However, her friends later call her to suggest eating out and watching a movie.

In the fourth scenario, she resolves to stay in and read some Nazi literature. However, her friends later call her to suggest going for a drink and picking a fight after getting drunk (2012, p. 354).

In each case, while judging it to be better to act on her resolution, she drops it and goes out with her friends. Subjects are asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the claim that “the agent manifests weakness of will in going out with her friends”.

According to May and Holton, in each case, subjects overall agree that the agent exhibits weakness of will as the average response is above midpoint. However, when the action the agent ends up doing is bad, participants are more inclined to attribute weakness of will to her, as the average response is higher. These results suggest that normative and/or evaluative considerations, including the moral valence of action, affect common-sense verdicts on whether the agent shows weakness of will in acting as she does (2012, pp. 355-356).

Taken as a whole, May and Holton’s findings, according to them, demonstrate that “focusing on either resolution-violations or judgement-violations (or both) exclusively isn’t quite right” (2012, p. 357). “[N]either is sufficient on its own for an ascription of weakness of will; and other features also play a role, such as the moral valence of the action” (p. 342). The results “indicate that normative or evaluative considerations affect people’s judgements about whether an agent is being weak-willed” (p. 356).<sup>72</sup>

Of course, there is no doubt that we should not treat these results as conclusive evidence for understanding the ordinary notion of weakness of will. That is at least because this empirical work is based on a small number of participants between the ages of 18 to 24 years. To do high-quality empirical

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<sup>72</sup> For more detail, see May and Holton (2012).

work, we need a large number of participants in different age groups, *inter alia*. Further, some might question May and Holton's interpretation of the results of these experiments. Nonetheless, I do not wish to do so. Nor do I claim that their findings provide us with conclusive evidence to show how common sense understands weakness of will. My aim has been to show that my intuition is at least to some extent representative. That is because following my intuition has led me to an account of weakness of will which is in line with the findings of some empirical work.

To see how May and Holton's work supports my proposed account, my account of weakness of will includes both judgement-violation and intention-violation, *inter alia*. In addition, it takes the agent's practical reason into account as a normative factor affecting our judgements about whether a given case is a case of weakness of will.

## **Section 6. Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter has been to clarify my proposed account according to which weakness of will arises when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason, where practical commitments are those involved in the process of action. To this end, I have first clarified what I have had in mind by "the process of action". Following Searle (2001, p. 15), it has been clear that we can imagine three gaps in the process of action. Then, I have addressed three practical commitments involved in the process of action, and explained how they are connected to Searle's gaps. That is, the agent might be subject to one or more practical commitments in each gap. The discussion of practical

commitments raised the question of why it is the case that the agent is practically committed to acting in a certain way. To answer this question, I referred to Broome's analysis of Requirements\* of rationality in the third section. Then, I highlighted some essential characteristics of the proposed account and their significance. Finally, I have addressed some implications of the proposed account and answer some possible questions.

Some significant results of this study are the following. First, it indicates that akrasia, in its traditional sense, is not identical to weakness of will, on the proposed account. Nor are they totally separate. Rather, there is an overlap between them in the following way. Some cases of akrasia (in its narrow sense) are cases of weakness of will, as I conceive it; however, there are cases of akrasia that are not cases of weakness of will, and cases of weakness of will that are not cases of akrasia. Further, the proposed account allows the possibility of inverse akrasia as a kind of weakness of will. Moreover, this account goes beyond Mele's idea of weakness of will (2012), the idea that inspired my proposed account. I have also pointed out the results of May and Holton's empirical work (2012) to show that my proposed account is in line with their findings about what common sense thinks about weakness of will.

Having gained a clear understanding of the proposed account, I will introduce two rival views in the next chapter. I will also examine the application of these two rivals as well as the proposed account to some cases, in order to show the superiority of the proposed account over them.

## **Chapter 5. The Application of Two Rival Views and the Proposed Account to some Cases**

In the previous chapter, I have accounted for weakness of will in terms of withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. Further, to clarify why the agent is practically committed to acting in a certain way by virtue of her practical judgement and intention, I have appealed to Requirements\* of rationality. This implies that practical commitments have normative force derived from Requirements\* of rationality. However, their normative force can be overridden by a good enough normative reason, within my proposed framework.

In reaction to this proposed picture, one might wonder why I have not taken weakness of will to be the violation of Requirements\* of rationality, the view that I call the standard rival view; or why I have not accounted for weakness of will in terms of the violation of Requirements\* of rationality without a good enough normative reason, the view that I term the modified rival view. In addition, she/he might wonder what difference it would make if we adopt one of these two rival views rather than my account according to which weakness of will is understood in terms of withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason.

In response to these questions, this chapter is designed to show that my account of weakness of will is adequate to make sense of a range of cases, and also it is superior to these two rival views. To this end, the first section addresses these two rival views, called the standard and modified rival views,

and explains how they are different from my proposed account. Then, I will offer some cases involved in the process of action, and consider the application of these two rival views and my proposed account to them. More precisely, section 2 will consider cases involved in the first gap. The third section will focus on cases involved in the second gap. Finally, cases involved in the third gap will be discussed in section 4.

The results indicate that my proposed account works better than those two rival views in making sense of our intuition about whether a given case is a case of weakness of will. Further, the proposed account is more economical and simpler than the standard and modified rival views. That is because these rival views require a supplementary account of “cancelling event” whereas the proposed account does not. Regarding the standard rival view, it twice turns out to be inadequate. Leaving aside the standard rival view, considering the application of the modified rival view to some cases will make it clear that the violation of a Requirement\* of rationality, on which the modified rival view is based, does not play a necessary role in our attribution of weakness of will to cases. Then, the question for the modified rival view is what role the violation of Requirements\* of rationality plays in cases of weakness of will, given that their violation is not, on this view, sufficient to attribute weakness of will to the agent.

Before engaging in the main discussion of this chapter, it is worth noting one issue. The proposed account and the modified rival view take the agent’s practical reason into account. That is, one of the main determinants of whether the agent shows weakness of will is, for them, whether she has a good enough normative reason for performing the action she does. This implies that to

consider whether these views can make sense of a given case, we need first to know what it is, for their proponents, to be a good enough normative reason and what it is not. Nevertheless, I am not going to discuss this issue. That is because their advocates may answer these questions differently. It depends on which theory of reasons they adopt since various theories may have different views on what counts as a reason and whether it is a good enough normative one. Then, to undertake the task of this section, I just grant what the proposed account and the modified rival view claim about whether or not the agent acts with a good enough normative reason in a given case.

### **Section 1. Two Rival Views**

This section explains two rivals to my account of weakness of will. I am assuming that these two rival views could arise as a result of questioning my proposed account. That is, one might claim that weakness of will is better understood in terms of violating Requirements\* of rationality, the view I call the standard rival view. Alternatively, it might be claimed that weakness of will arises when the agent fails to comply with Requirements\* of rationality without a good enough normative reason. I term this view the modified rival view.

These two rival views differ from mine in terms of their essential components. That is, these rivals fundamentally refer to the violation of Requirements\* of rationality in order to account for weakness of will, whereas my account is based on the withdrawal of practical commitments. Since that is the case, it once again is important to be clear that practical commitments are not, on my picture, identified with Requirements\* of rationality. Further, the

standard rival view does not take account of the agent's practical reason in explaining weakness of will while the modified rival view and my proposed account do. It is worth emphasising that the difference between these three views, the two rival views and mine, is not just conceptual. Rather, as we will see in the next three sections, they have different implications about whether the agent shows weakness of will in acting as she does.

Having explained the standard and modified rival views, I shall consider the application of the proposed account and these rival views to some cases. In chapter 4, I explained that, following Searle (2001), we can imagine at least three gaps in the process of action; and in each gap, the agent may be subject to some practical commitment(s) and some Requirement(s)\* of rationality. To keep our discussion manageable, I shall consider each gap in a separate section.

## **Section 2. First Gap**

### **I. Reasoning Commitment and Enkrasia**

Once the question what to do arises, the agent might engage in practical reasoning. At least in some cases, her aim of doing so is to bring her subsequent conduct in line with her practical judgement. In these cases, when the agent reaches a practical judgement in favour of a certain action, she is practically committed to making her conduct accord with this judgement. This sort of commitment made by the agent's practical judgement is what I have called *reasoning commitment*.

To put it in terms of Requirements\* of rationality, we have considered that as guidance on how the agent is rationally required to bridge the first gap, the

gap between the agent's practical judgement and intention, *Enkrasia* is promising. According to *Enkrasia*, roughly, rationality requires of the agent that if she reaches a judgement in favour of doing an action, she will intend to take this action, given that other conditions entailed in the accurate formulation of *Enkrasia* are met (Broome, 2013, pp. 170-171). Thus, rationality imposes a constraint on the transition from reasoning to intending.

In what follows, I shall offer two examples, labelled “*Gym*” and “*False Testimony*”. They are cases where the agent is subject to reasoning commitment and *Enkrasia*. Then, I will apply the proposed account and two rival views to these cases.

*Gym*. Suppose the agent engages in practical reasoning to figure out what to do on Saturday morning, whether to work on her project or go to a gym. She has undertaken an important project for which the deadline is on Monday. She holds that it is crucial for her to successfully accomplish her project. Then, she conclusively reaches a judgement in favour of working on her project on Saturday. Nevertheless, she feels a temptation to go to the gym, the temptation coming from an excessively narcissist tendency. Although she still believes she ought to work on Saturday, she eventually intends to go to the gym, and proceeds to do so. In this case, the agent intuitively seems to manifest weakness of will since temptation deflects her from the course of action that she believes she ought to take.

*False Testimony*. The agent is offered a promotion to a higher position and higher salary if and only if she gives false testimony about her colleague. On the one hand, she believes that giving false testimony is morally wrong. On the

other hand, this proposed post is the position for which she had worked hard for years; and now the opportunity for promotion arises. Further, her family are financially dependent upon her, and she is in dire financial circumstances. To break out of this financial disaster, she knows that she badly needs this salary increase. In the light of all these considerations, she judges that she ought to provide false testimony. This means although she knows that giving false testimony is morally wrong, she believes that she has most reason in favour of providing false testimony. Nonetheless, she does not eventually give (or intend to give) false testimony while she still believes she ought to accept the offer and provide false testimony. Then, she acts against her practical judgement. She refuses to provide false testimony owing to the fact that it is morally wrong. That is, she acts as she does out of morality. In this case, the agent violates the Requirement\* of *Enkrasia*; however, it does not intuitively seem she manifests weakness of will.

Having offered the *Gym* and *False Testimony* examples, I shall apply the proposed account of weakness of will to them to see how well it can explain these two cases.

### **The proposed account**

According to my proposed account, weakness of will occurs when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. As far as my account goes, in both cases, the *Gym* case and the *False Testimony* case, the agent acts against her reasoning commitment, the commitment made by the agent's practical judgement. However, in the first case, the agent, in my view, acts as she does

without a good enough normative reason. That is, what motivates the agent to act as she does is not a good enough normative reason justifying her action. As a result, we are inclined to attribute weakness of will to her. By contrast, in the second case, the agent's reason for which she acts as she does is morality. In this case, I take it that her reason is good enough in a normative sense, thereby justifying her action. Then, although the agent acts against her practical commitment, she does not show weakness of will due to acting for a good enough normative reason.

It then appears that my account well matches our intuitions about whether the *Gym* and *False Testimony* cases are cases of weakness of will. Further, it can well explain what makes them different in terms of being a case of weakness of will despite the fact that in both cases, the agent acts against her reasoning commitment. This in turn makes clear the importance of taking account of the agent's practical reason in determining whether a case of (say) acting against practical commitment(s) is a case of weakness of will.

Having considered the application of my proposed account to these two cases, I shall examine the application of the standard rival view to them.

### **The standard rival view**

According to the standard rival view, weakness of will arises when the agent violates a Requirement\* of rationality. In the *Gym* case, the agent is subject to *Enkrasia* commanding her to intend to take the action that she judges she ought to do. However, the agent intends to do the action opposed to the one in favour of which she has judged, thereby failing to comply with *Enkrasia*. Hence she displays weakness of will.

Although the standard rival view can explain why the *Gym* case is a case of weakness of will, it fails to make sense of our intuition about the *False Testimony* example. That is because we are not inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent in the *False Testimony* case although she fails to comply with the rational Requirement\* of *Enkrasia*. Then, it appears that the standard rival view is not adequate to account for weakness of will.

### **Reactions to the inadequacy of the standard rival view**

In reaction to the *False Testimony* case and the idea of the inadequacy of the standard rival view, there are at least three possibilities. First, the advocate of the standard rival view might question the correctness of the intuition to which I have appealed. More specifically, (s)he might claim that my intuition about the *False Testimony* case is not correct; and the agent shows weakness of will in acting as she does.

Second, the opponent might claim that the agent does not violate *Enkrasia*; rather, she acts in accordance with the judgement that she has at the time of action. To see how that is the case, the opponent might claim the agent might change her original judgement and come to a judgement in favour of acting as she does. In this case, she conforms to *Enkrasia*.

Thirdly, while admitting that there is a defect in the standard rival view, the opponent might modify it. (S)he might bring the agent's practical reason into the picture of weakness of will. (S)he might claim weakness of will is the violation of Requirement(s)\* of rationality without a good enough reason in a normative sense. I have labelled this view the modified rival view.

Having outlined these reactions, replying to them is in order.

In response to those who have been sceptical about the correctness of my intuition, I should admit that I have nothing to prove the correctness of my intuition about this specific case. Nonetheless, I have pointed out the results of May and Holton's empirical work (2012) in chapter 4. According to them, the results indicate that judgement-violation is not by itself sufficient to make a case weakness of will. Other factors "also play a role, such as the moral valence of the action" (p. 342).<sup>73</sup> Further, I have taken it as an assumption that my intuition about whether the agent shows weakness of will in acting as she does is on the right track. Having made this assumption, I have been embarked on offering an account of weakness of will and examining how well the two rival views and my proposed account might make sense of cases where the agent intuitively exhibits weakness of will.

The second possible reaction has been the claim that the agent eventually comes to the judgement in favour of the action that she takes. Then, she acts in accordance with her judgement at the time of action, thereby not violating *Enkrasia*. In response, I should admit that I do have nothing to prove what the agent's ultimate judgement has been. However, it has been supposed that the agent's sincere judgement that she has at the time of action is in favour of providing false testimony. Then, it has been taken for granted that she acts against the rational Requirement\* of *Enkrasia*.

As the third possibility, we have considered that the opponent may accept the standard rival view to be defective, thereby modifying it. If that is the case, I take it as promising since the advocate of the standard rival view confesses to its ineffectiveness. However, introducing the modified rival view requires me

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<sup>73</sup> For more detail of May and Holton's work and its results, see May and Holton (2012).

to examine its application to cases offered in this section in order to see how well it might work in determining whether or not they are cases of weakness of will. In what follows, I apply this view to the *Gym* and *False Testimony* cases.

### **The modified rival view**

The modified rival view accounts for weakness of will in terms of violating Requirements\* of rationality without a good enough normative reason. As far as it goes, I have to admit that the modified rival can as equally well as my view make sense of the *Gym* and *False Testimony* cases. In both cases, the agent is supposed to act against her practical judgement, thereby violating the Requirement\* of *Enkrasia*. The *Gym* case is a case of weakness of will since the agent, on the modified rival view, acts as she does without a good enough normative reason. By contrast, in the *False Testimony* case, the agent's reason for which she acts is good enough in a normative sense, thereby justifying her action. Consequently, it is not a case of weakness of will.

Having considered some cases involved in the first gap, I move on to the second gap.

### **Section 3. Second Gap**

As explained in chapter 4, when the agent intends to take a certain action, there is a potential gap between intending the action and performing it or, more precisely, initiating the action—the 'second gap' (Searle, 2001, p. 15). In what follows, I offer two versions of a case labelled *Jogging*. This is a case where the agent is subject to executive commitment and the Requirement\* of *Persistence of Intention*. Then, I will examine which view works better in making sense of these two versions.

## I. Executive Commitment and Persistence of Intention

Take a case where the agent intends to go jogging on the coming Saturday morning. The agent's intention implies that she has settled on taking this action, thereby being committed to doing it. Following Mele (2012, p. 16), we have called this executive commitment. In this case, at least one of the Requirements\* of rationality to which she is subject is *Persistence of Intention*. According to this Requirement\*, the agent is required by rationality that if she at one time ( $t_1$ ) intends to take a certain action, she intends to perform the action later ( $t_2$ ), that is, when she believes it is time of action, given that nothing intervenes (Broome, 2013, p. 178).<sup>74</sup>

Consider two versions of the case offered above. I label the first version “*Jogging v. Laziness*” (for short, *JvL*) and the second one “*Jogging v. Heart Attack*” (for short, *JvHA*).

*JvL*. Having intended to go jogging on Saturday morning, the agent feels lazy when the time of action arrives. This in turn leads her to abandon her prior intention to go jogging. In this case, the agent intuitively seems to manifest weakness of will when she abandons her prior intention merely out of laziness, all other things being equal.

*JvHA*. While still maintaining her intention to go jogging on Saturday, the agent has a heart attack in the intervening time. Her doctor advises her not to do any exercise at least for two months; otherwise, she would put her life at risk. As a result of such advice, the agent drops her prior intention. She does so

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<sup>74</sup> I take “nothing intervenes” in a broad sense including nothing prevents the agent from doing the intended action (say, X) and no cancelling event happens; nor does she consider whether to do X at a time between intending at the earlier time to perform X and fulfilling X at the later time.

in order to preserve herself. In this case, unlike in the first, it does not intuitively seem that the agent shows weakness of will in dropping her intention owing to self-preservation.

If our intuition is on the right track, the question is how we can explain these two versions of the *Jogging* story in terms of whether or not they are cases of weakness of will. I shall first consider the application of the proposed account to these two versions. Then, I will discuss the standard and modified rival views.

Before applying these three views to *JvL* and *JvHA*, It is worth noting that in both scenarios, the agent is supposed not to engage in practical reasoning on what to do—that is, on whether to abandon her prior intention. Nor does she make any practical judgement in favour of either side. This means she is not subject to *Enkrasia*. Instead, she is subject to the Requirement\* of *Persistence of Intention*.

### **The proposed account**

According to my proposed account, weakness of will consists in withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) practical commitments without a good enough normative reason. In the *Jogging* story, the agent is subject to executive commitment owing to her intention to go jogging. When she drops her intention, she abandons her executive commitment. In the *JvL* scenario, the agent does so due to laziness. However, her inclination towards laziness cannot, in my view, provide a good enough normative reason to justify abandoning her practical commitment. As a result, she manifests weakness of will in acting as she does. By contrast, we are not inclined to treat the *JvHA*

case as a case of weakness of will. In my view, that is because the reason for which she abandons her executive commitment (namely, self-preservation) is a good enough reason in a normative sense.

Having considered the application of my proposed account to *JvL* and *JvHA*, I move on to the standard rival view and the modified rival view and examine how well they deal with these two scenarios.

### **The standard rival view**

The advocate of the standard rival view might state that, in the *JvL* version, the agent's laziness as a kind of inclination is not a sort of cancelling event counted as an intervention licensing her to cease her intention. Then, the agent drops her intention while no cancelling event occurs, thereby violating *Persistence of Intention*. Consequently, we are inclined to attribute weakness of will to her. By contrast, the *JvHA* version is not a case of weakness of will since the agent abandons her prior intention due to a cancelling event happening. That is, the agent's heart attack is treated as a cancelling event licensing her to drop her intention. Then, the agent does not violate *Persistence of Intention*. Rather, she acts in a way that she conforms to it, thereby not exhibiting weakness of will.

Although it seems that the standard rival view can account for our intuition about these two scenarios, it is worth highlighting one issue. The standard rival suggests that when the agent is subject to the Requirement\* of *Persistence of Intention*, this Requirement\* is not by itself sufficient to determine whether the agent exhibits weakness of will in dropping her intention. That is because whether or not she fails to comply with *Persistence of Intention* in dropping her

intention depends on whether any cancelling event, in a broad sense, occurs. If so, we then need to know more than what Broome has told us. That is, we still need to know what the advocates of the standard rival view take as a cancelling event and what they do not. This means the standard rival view requires a supplementary account of “cancelling events”. By contrast, my proposed account is more economical and simpler as it does not need this supplementary account.

### **The modified rival view**

On the modified rival view, weakness of will, as previously mentioned, arises when the agent violates a Requirement\* of rationality while her reason for acting as she does is not good enough in a normative sense. To account for the *Jogging* story, the modified rival might provide the following explanation.

Laziness is not sufficient to license the agent to drop her prior intention. Hence, in the first scenario (*JvL*), no cancelling event happens, all other things being equal. Then, when the agent abandons her intention to go jogging out of laziness, she fails to comply with the Requirement\* of *Persistence of Intention*. Since she does this merely out of laziness, she fails to comply with this \*Requirement without a good enough normative reason. Consequently, she exhibits weakness of will on the *JvL* version.

By contrast, in the *JvHA* scenario, the agent’s heart attack provides her with sufficient grounds for dropping her prior intention. That is, the agent’s heart attack is taken as a cancelling event licensing her to abandon her intention to go jogging. Then, she does not violate the Requirement\* of *Persistence of Intention*, and so does not manifest weakness of will. Alternatively, if one

refuses to deem the heart attack to be a cancelling event, the modified rival view may account for the *JvHA* version in the following way. Even if we grant that no cancelling event occurs in this scenario, the agent does not exhibit weakness of will despite violating *Persistence of Intention* since she acts as she does for a good enough normative reason.

The modified rival's attempt to account for these two versions makes it clear that this view, like the standard rival view, needs a supplementary account of a cancelling event. By contrast, my proposed account does not require this supplementary account. Then, I take it that my proposed account is superior to the standard and modified rival views. That is because it is more economical and simpler than these two rival views.

Having discussed the *Jogging* example involved in the second gap, I move on to the third gap.

#### **Section 4. Third Gap**

Given that some actions are extended in time, there is a potential gap between initiating the intended action and completing it—the gap that Searle (2001, p. 15) calls the third gap. Note that the size of this gap does not matter. It can be even so big that it is extended through the agent's life. In what follows, I give two classes of examples involved in the third gap. The first group sketches cases in which the agent is subject to instrumental commitment and *Instrumental Requirement*. The second type of examples describes the agent as one who is subject to executive commitment and the Requirement\* of *No Contradictory Intentions*. In each category, I will examine the application of

the proposed account and the rival views to those cases in order to see how well they can explain cases offered in this section.

### **I. Instrumental Commitment and Instrumental Requirement**

Given that in some cases, the agent needs to take some means to fulfil her intended action, by intending to accomplish this action, the agent is in some sense committed to taking the necessary means to her intended action. To explain the normative force of this commitment, labelled instrumental commitment, *Instrumental Requirement* is promising. According to this Requirement\*, the agent is required by rationality that if she intends to achieve an end, and if she believes that if she is not to take the means implied by her intended end, because of that she will fail to achieve this intended end, she then intends to take this means (Broome, 2013, p. 169).

Take a case where the agent intends to write a paper to submit to a conference. This intention in turn leads her to start writing the paper. After working for two days on the paper, she realises that finishing the paper on time requires working at least 6 hours every day.<sup>75</sup> She does not, however, intend to do so although she still maintains her original intention. Instead, she spends her time on doing other actions.<sup>76</sup>

Note that she does not explicitly engage in practical reasoning on what to do in order to finish the paper on time. That is, she does not make a practical judgement that, for example, she ought to work on the paper 6 hours every day. Rather, she implicitly knows that it needs daily work and each day for at least 6

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<sup>75</sup> This case is involved in the third gap since the agent is supposed to have embarked on writing the paper; however, she has not finished it yet.

<sup>76</sup> I am assuming that this combination of attitudes is possible although there may be some who disagree.

hours. Nor does she judge that she ought to work on the paper rather than do other activities when she takes them. Thus, the Requirement\* of *Enkrasia* does not apply to her. Nor is she subject to the Requirement\* of *Persistence of Intention*. That is because she has not intended to work on the paper 6 hours every day when she realises that finishing the paper on time requires daily 6-hour work. Therefore, she violates neither *Enkrasia* nor *Persistence of Intention*.

Instead, the agent fails to comply with *Instrumental Requirement*, given that she has not abandoned her original intention to write the paper for the conference. She violates *Instrumental Requirement* because she does not intend to take the means to her intended end, the means which she knows to be necessary to achieve her intended end. In doing so, she also acts against her instrumental commitment.<sup>77</sup>

Now consider two versions of this story termed *Paper*. I label the first scenario *Paper v Contrary Inclinations* (for short, *PvCI*) and the second one *Paper v Sick Child* (for short, *PvSC*).

*PvCI*. The agent does not intend to work on the paper 6 hours every day. Rather, she intends, for example, to watch TV, to go to a party, and so on; and she proceeds to do so. She does those activities because her contrary inclinations make her tempted to watch TV and to go to the party. She then fails to resist the temptation, thereby being deflected by her contrary inclinations.

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<sup>77</sup> There might be cases in which the agent drops her original intention. However, it is here supposed that she still sticks to her original intention.

*PvSC*. While still keeping her intention to write the paper, she does not intend to work on it 6 hours every day. That is because her son is sick; and she has to nurse him back to health.

In both cases, the agent acts against her instrumental commitment and violates *Instrumental Requirement*. Nonetheless, the agent intuitively seems to manifest weakness of will in the *PvCI* scenario, but not in the *PvSC* one. If our intuition about these two scenarios is on the right track, the question is what makes the *PvSC* version different from the *PvCI* one. More specifically, the question is why we have been inclined to take the *PvCI* case as a case of weakness of will, but not the *PvSC* one—although, in both cases, the agent acts in the same way. That is, on both versions, she acts against her instrumental commitment and violates *Instrumental Requirement*. In what follows, I first consider the proposed account. Then, I will discuss the standard and modified rival views.

### **The proposed account**

On my proposed account, in the *PvCI* scenario the agent acts as she does without a good enough normative reason. That is, her contrary inclinations, motivating her to act as she does, are not good enough, in a normative sense, to justify her acting against her practical commitment. By contrast, in the *PvSC* scenario, the agent acts as she does in order to nurse her sick child; and I take this to provide her with a good enough normative reason, the reason justifying her action. If that is the case, this explanation once again makes it clear why we need to take the agent's reason for acting against her practical commitment into account.

Considering the application of the standard rival view to these two versions of the *Paper* example is in order.

### **The standard rival view**

According to the standard rival view, weakness of will arises when the agent acts in a way that violates a Requirement\* to which she is subject. If so, this view, as far as I can see, fails to explain why these two scenarios are different in terms of whether or not they are cases of weakness of will. That is because on the *PvSC* version, the agent does not intuitively seem to exhibit weakness of will despite violating *Instrumental Requirement*. Then, it appears that the standard rival view is inadequate since it fails to give any explanation as to why this version is not a case of weakness of will, given that our intuition is on the right track.

If that is the case, I take it that the *PvSC* version shows the superiority of my account over the standard rival view. That is because the standard rival, as we have considered, fails to make sense of this scenario, whereas my account can offer an explanation for it. Then, I take it as evidence to suggest the standard rival view is not a satisfactory account.

Regarding the *PvSC* version, the idea that my proposed account is superior to the standard rival view might provoke at least the following three reactions.

### **Three possible reactions**

First, one might express scepticism about the correctness of my intuition, and claim that the *PvSC* version is a case of weakness of will. Second, one might incline to take a narrower view of weakness of will than I have got. For

example, (s)he might agree with Holton (2009) that only cases of over-ready revision of a resolution are cases of weakness of will. Third, the opponent might accept that there is a flaw in the standard rival view, thereby offering the modified rival view. To these three reactions, I shall offer the following replies.

In reaction to questioning the correctness of the intuition to which I have appealed, I should admit that I have nothing to prove that my intuition about this specific version is correct. Nonetheless, I have previously pointed out the results of May and Holton's experiments (2012) to show that the intuition to which I have appealed is to some extent representative of common sense intuitions. According to May and Holton (2012), the results of their study suggest that common sense judgements about whether the agent manifests weakness of will are affected by the normative factor(s) (p. 356). Further, I have, as previously mentioned, taken it as an assumption that our intuition is on the right track. Having made this assumption, I have been trying to give an account of weakness of will and examine the application of the proposed account and the two rival views to some cases.

To those who wish to take the concept of weakness of will more narrowly than I have done, I should admit that I have hardly anything more than my intuition that in some cases where the agent acts against her instrumental commitment, she might exhibit weakness of will. Given that I have supposed my intuition is on the right track, if we seek to account for weakness of will such that it in part elaborates what common sense thinks about weakness of will, narrowing the notion of weakness of will such that it captures either cases of judgement-violation or cases of intention-violation (or both) may result in failing to provide an adequate explanation of how common sense understands

weakness of will. To back up my proposed account and show that the intuitions to which I have appealed are to some extent representative, I have pointed out the results of May and Holton's empirical work (2012) in chapter 4 (section 5). Further, my account of weakness of will includes cases of over-ready resolution-violation as a sub-class of cases of weakness of will.

As regards the third reaction, if the advocate of the standard rival view acknowledges this view to be defective, I take this to be promising. Further, in what follows, I put the standard rival view aside and won't examine it any more. That is because it has twice appeared to be inadequate. One has been on the *PvSC* version sketched above. The other has been in the *False Testimony* case given in the first gap, the case where the agent violates the Requirement\* of *Enkrasia*, but she does not intuitively show weakness of will.

Considering the application of the modified rival view to the *PvCI* case and the *PvSC* case is in order.

### **The modified rival view**

The modified rival view accounts for weakness of will in terms of violating Requirement(s)\* of rationality without a good enough normative reason. According to this view, the agent exhibits weakness of will in the *PvCI* scenario due to violating *Instrumental Requirement* without a good enough normative reason. By contrast, she has a good enough normative reason for acting as she does on the *PvSC* version. Thus, her action is not a case of weakness of will despite violating *Instrumental Requirement*.

It then appears that the modified rival view can well make sense of our intuition about whether these two versions are cases of weakness of will. As a

result, we need to consider further cases in order to be in a position to argue for one view or the other.

## **II. Executive Commitment and No Contradictory Intentions**

In what follows I offer a case, labelled *Dieter*. This is a case where the agent is subject to executive commitment and the Requirement\* of *No Contradictory Intentions* in the third gap. Further, this case can be interpreted in two ways. I label the first reading of this case *Dieter 1* and the second reading *Dieter 2*. To keep things manageable, I first offer a general description of the *Dieter* example. Then, I will explain *Dieter 1*. Having considered the application of the proposed account and the modified rival view to *Dieter 1*, I will discuss *Dieter 2*, and apply these two views to it.

### **The *Dieter* Example**

Assume the agent intends to be on a healthy diet in her life. She also believes “being on a healthy diet” entails not to eat (or to abstain from eating) any fatty food and sugary snacks. This intention is a general intention concerning all circumstances in her life, but not a specific situation. Let us call this sort of intention a “personal policy”, following Bratman (1999, p. 87). Having formed this intention, the agent commits herself to bringing about the intended action, thereby being subject to executive commitment. Further, she is required by rationality not to have contradictory intentions, given *No Contradictory Intentions* (Broome, 2013, p. 156). That is, she is rationally required not to simultaneously have an intention to be on a healthy diet and an intention to eat

fatty food or sugary snacks; where she treats this intention as opposed to her intention to be on a healthy diet.<sup>78</sup>

Suppose the agent starts being on a diet subsequent to her intention to do so. She later goes to a party. The smell and sight of fatty food on the table is so tempting that it triggers a temptation to have that kind of food. Consequently, she skips her diet and eats fatty food at the party.

Note that when the agent is tempted to have fatty food, she does not engage in deliberation on what to do; nor does she make any practical judgement in favour of abstaining from eating that kind of food. Rather, having been tempted to eat fatty food, she proceeds to take the tempted option. Then, she is not subject to *Enkrasia*. Nor does *Persistence of Intention* apply to her. To see why, this requirement, roughly, requires of the agent that if she at  $t_1$  forms an intention to do a certain action at  $t_2$ , she will at  $t_2$  intend to take the action, given that nothing intervenes. When the agent at  $t_2$  intends to do the action, she would meet this requirement. To apply it to the *Dieter* case, take the moment when the agent intends to be on a healthy diet as  $t_1$ , and when the agent initiates being on a diet as  $t_2$ . This means that she at  $t_1$  forms a general intention to be on a healthy diet; and then, she at  $t_2$  embarks on doing so. In this case, when the agent at  $t_2$  intentionally, consciously and freely embarks on being on a diet, she meets *Persistence of Intention* and would no longer be subject to it. Rather, having been on a diet makes her subject to the Requirement\* of *No Contradictory Intentions*.

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<sup>78</sup> As mentioned in chapter 4, *No Contradictory Intentions* roughly instructs that the agent is required by rationality that she does not simultaneously have an intention to  $P$  and also have an intention to  $\sim P$ . According to Broome, each intention entails a number of dispositions each of which may be manifested in the agent's action (Broome, 2013, p. 86; p. 156). If so, I take it that if the agent's action manifests what she believes to entail  $\sim P$ , this implies that she simultaneously has contrary intentions, given that she also has an intention to  $P$ .

There are at least two possible interpretations of this case; I label them *Dieter 1* and *Dieter 2*. In what follows, I first explain *Dieter 1* and consider the application of the proposed account and the modified rival to it. Then, I will move on to *Dieter 2*.

### ***Dieter 1***

When the dieter fails to act on her intention to be on a healthy diet, it does not necessarily imply that she permanently drops this intention; rather, she might still maintain it. This does not, of course, mean that while eating fatty food in the party, she simultaneously has two effective contrary intentions.<sup>79</sup> Instead, it may be that her intention to be on a healthy diet is not temporarily effective at the time of eating fatty food.

If that is the case, this implies that the agent acts against her original intention while still maintaining it. Then, she simultaneously has two conflicting inconsistent intentions although only one of them is effective at the time of acting. As a result, she fails to comply with *No Contradictory Intentions* since there is inconsistency among her intentions. On the one hand, she has an intention to be on a healthy diet; and on the other hand, she has an intention to eat fatty food, an intention that she knows is inconsistent with the original one.

Further, when the agent eats fatty food despite her original intention to be on a healthy diet, this implies that she at least temporarily withdraws her executive commitment. She does so because of the temptation to have fatty food. That is, this temptation at least temporarily deflects her from her

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<sup>79</sup> By “effective intention”, I mean the intention that the agent actually has in doing an intentional, conscious and free action.

executive commitment to being on a healthy diet, the commitment made by the agent's intention. When the agent acts against her original intention and eats fatty food merely due to being tempted to do so, she intuitively seems to exhibit weakness of will.

### **The proposed account and the modified rival view**

According to *Dieter 1*, the agent acts in a way that violates the Requirement\* of *No Contradictory Intentions* and also withdraws (or acts against) her executive commitment. She does so as a result of succumbing to the temptation to have fatty food, all other things being equal. In this case, both the modified rival and my views may take it that merely being tempted to eat that kind of food does not give a good enough normative reason to the agent to do so, all other things being equal. Then, they may explain this case in the following way. The agent, on the modified rival view, shows weakness of will since she violates the Requirement\* of *No Contradictory Intentions* without a good enough normative reason. On my view, we are inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent since she withdraws (or acts against) her executive commitment while she does not have a good enough normative reason to justify her acting as she does. It then appears that both views can equally well make sense of our intuition about this reading of the *Dieter* case (*Dieter 1*).

As previously mentioned, the above interpretation of the *Dieter* example is not the only way of understanding it. Rather, one may understand it differently. Considering the alternative interpretation of the *Dieter* story, termed *Dieter 2*, is in order.

## *Dieter 2*

One might admit that the dieter intuitively seems to display weakness of will in being deflected by temptation from her original intention. Nonetheless, someone may object that it is psychologically impossible for the agent to have inconsistent intentions. Instead, the agent may make an exception in her intention. Looking back on the dieter, she may make an exception in her original intention to be on a healthy diet when facing fatty food in the party. Then, she may not have two inconsistent intentions. If that is the case, this means the agent does not violate *No Contradictory Intentions*, given that she has no other inconsistent intention with her new intention which she has at the time of acting.

In reaction, it is worth noting two issues. The first concerns the question whether it is really possible for the agent to end up with inconsistent intentions. In chapter 4 (section 3), I have given Broome's example of "intending to be in London and intending not to be in London" to show that it is possible to have such a combination of attitudes (Broome, 2013, p. 156). Then, I am assuming that it is quite possible for the agent to end up having inconsistent intentions. When the agent is in such a mental state, she violates the Requirement\* of *No Contradictory Intentions*. In doing so, the agent acts against her executive commitment, the commitment made by her prior intention.

The second point relates to the idea that although the agent intuitively seems to show weakness of will in eating fatty food, she may make an exception in her original intention. If so, she does not violate *No Contradictory Intentions*, given that she has no other intention that is inconsistent with her new intention

which she has at the time of acting. In reply, I do not deny this possibility; and for the sake of argument, I grant it. Having granted that, I shall consider the application of the proposed account and the modified rival view to this case.

### **The proposed account**

When the agent makes an exception in her original intention, it does not follow that she does not withdraw her executive commitment to being on a healthy diet; rather, she withdraws it in acting as she does. We are then inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent since she, on my view, withdraws her practical commitment without a good enough normative reason. That is, what motivates her to eat fatty food is not good enough, in a normative sense, to justify being deflected from what she has committed herself to bringing about.

### **The modified rival view**

It has been claimed that in *Dieter 2*, the agent intuitively seems to manifest weakness of will when she eats fatty food. Nonetheless, she does not violate the Requirement\* of *No Contradictory Intentions*. Rather, she makes an exception in her original intention to be on a healthy diet in her life.

To apply the modified rival view to *Dieter 2*, this view fails to make sense of this case as a case of weakness of will. That is because the agent does not, as already mentioned, violate the Requirement\* of *No Contradictory Intentions*; however, she intuitively displays weakness of will. If that is right, this implies that the violation of a Requirement\* of rationality is not necessary in our attribution of weakness of will to this case. That is because this is a case where the agent does not violate a Requirement\* of rationality, but she exhibits

weakness of will. Therefore, I take this case as evidence for inadequacy of the modified rival view.

Further, if the violation of a Requirement\* of rationality does not, as this case shows, play a necessary role in our attribution of weakness of will to the agent, the question to the advocates of the modified rival view is what role the violation of Requirements\* of rationality play in accounting for weakness of will, given that their violation is not, on this view, sufficient.

It then follows that my proposed account is superior to the modified rival view as we have not found any cases suggesting that (say) the withdrawal of practical commitments does not play a necessary role in cases of weakness of will.

### **III. Summary**

In the third gap, I have first given two versions of the *Paper* case in which the agent is subject to instrumental commitment and *Instrumental Requirement*. The agent intuitively manifests weakness of will in the first scenario (*PvCI*), but not in the second one (*PvSC*). The standard rival view has failed to make sense of the *PvSC*. That is because in this case, the agent does not intuitively exhibit weakness of will although she violates *Instrumental Requirement*. Unlike the standard rival view, both the proposed account and the modified rival view have been able to account for both of these two scenarios (*PvCI* and *PvSC*).

Further, I have offered the *Dieter* example where the agent is subject to the Requirement\* of *No contradictory Intentions* and executive commitment. There have been two possible interpretations of the *Dieter* story, labelled

*Dieter 1* and *Dieter 2*. I have applied the proposed account and the modified rival view to *Dieter 1* and *Dieter 2* in turn. According to the *Dieter 2* interpretation, the agent intuitively shows weakness of will although she does not violate the Requirement\* of *No contradictory Intentions*. I have taken it that this case suggests that the violation of a Requirement\* is not necessary in accounting for weakness of will. Then, the question for the advocates of the modified rival view is what role the violation of Requirements\* of rationality plays in cases of weakness of will, given that their violation is not, on this view, sufficient to attribute weakness of will to the agent.

In contrast to the modified rival view, my proposed account has offered an adequate explanation as to why we are inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent in the *Dieter* example. According to both interpretations of the *Dieter* story (*Dieter 1* and *Dieter 2*), the agent withdraws (or acts against) her executive commitment, after all. Since she does so without a good enough normative reason, she displays weakness of will.

Taken together, it then follows that my proposed account is superior to the standard and modified rival views.

## **Section 5. Conclusion**

This chapter has been designed in reaction to the question of why we should opt for my proposed account of weakness of will rather than either of two rival views called the standard and modified rival views. My aim has been to show the superiority of my proposed account over these two rival views. To this end, the first section has explained the standard and modified rival views, and clarified how they differ from the proposed account. Then, I have offered some

concrete cases, and considered the application of the proposed account and those rival views to these cases.

More specifically, section 2 has discussed some cases involved in the first gap. One of these examples has been the *False Testimony* case where the agent violates *Enkrasia* and acts against her reasoning commitment. However, she does not intuitively display weakness of will. We have considered that the standard rival view fails to explain why it is not a case of weakness of will, whereas the proposed account and the modified rival view can provide some explanation.

Section 3 has considered two versions of the *Jogging* case involved in the second gap. It has appeared that the standard and modified rival views require to provide us with a further account of cancelling events, given the Requirement\* of *Persistence of Intention*. To see why, this Requirement\* is one of those Requirements\* to which these rival views have appealed in order to account for weakness of will. According to this Requirement\*, the agent is required by rationality to persist in her intention unless some “cancelling event” happens. That is, if the agent ceases her intention due to some cancelling event occurring, she would not violate *Persistence of Intention*. Then, to determine whether a given case where the agent drops her intention is a case of the violation of *Persistence of Intention*, we need to know more than what this Requirement\* in itself tells us. That is, we require to know which events are sufficient or appropriate to count as cancelling events and which ones are not. That is, the standard and modified rival views need a

supplementary account of “cancelling events”<sup>80</sup>, in cases where the agent is subject to *Persistence of Intention*. If that is right, I take it that my account is superior to these two rival views since it is more economical and simpler in the sense that it does not require this supplementary account.

In section 4, I have offered two stories, the *Paper* and *Dieter* cases involved in the third gap. Having described two versions of the *Paper* story, called *PvCI* and *PvSC*, we have considered that in *PvSC* scenario, the agent does not manifest weakness of will despite violating *Instrumental Requirement* and acting against her instrumental commitment. This case has once again brought out the inadequacy of the standard rival view. By contrast, the two other views have had the advantage of making sense of this case. Since the standard rival view has twice appeared not to be effective, I have left it aside and focused on the proposed account and the modified rival view.

As regards the *Dieter* example, I have given two different interpretations of this case, termed *Dieter 1* and *Dieter 2*. According to both interpretations, the agent is subject to the Requirement\* of *No contradictory Intentions* and executive commitment. On the first reading (*Dieter 1*), the agent violates a Requirement\* to which she is subject, whereas she does not do so on the second interpretation (*Dieter 2*).

According to *Dieter 2*, the agent shows weakness of will although she complies with a Requirement\* to which she is subject. Having applied the modified rival view to this case, we have considered that the violation of a Requirement\* of rationality does not play a necessary role in explaining

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<sup>80</sup> Putting aside the fact that the modified rival view and my proposed account need to clarify what it is to be a good enough normative reason and what it is not.

weakness of will. Then, the question for the advocates of the modified rival view is what role the violation of Requirements\* of rationality plays in cases of weakness of will, given that their violation is not, on this view, sufficient to attribute weakness of will to the agent

As regards my proposed account, the findings of this chapter indicate that, in contrast to the standard and modified rival views, my proposed account works well in making sense of our intuition about whether a given case is a case of weakness of will. In addition, it is more economical and simpler since it does not need the supplementary account of “cancelling events”. Further, the results do not undermine the idea that withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) practical commitment(s) plays a necessary role in our attribution of weakness of will to cases.

### **Part 3**

#### **Chapter 6. The Implication(s) of Conjoining the Proposed Account of Weakness of Will with the Humean Theory of Reasons**

This chapter serves to elaborate my proposed account of weakness of will further by adding to it the Humean theory of reasons, and to consider the implication(s) of the resulting conjoint view. This provokes the following methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to take account of the results of considering the implication(s) of this conjoint view in deciding whether Humeanism is to be preferred to another theory of reasons. Suppose there are some advocates of my proposed account of weakness of will who give a positive answer to this methodological question. If so, the results of considering the implication(s) of the conjoint view at issue will give them some grounds for deciding whether to opt for Humeanism.

The first section gives a general picture of the main features of the Humean theory of reasons. Then, I will briefly explain the Proportionalist theory of the weight of reasons, the approach taken to be natural for Humeans to adopt in order to determine the weight of reasons. In the third section, I will sketch one possible implication of combining my proposed account of weakness of will with broadly Proportionalist Humeanism. This conjoint view implies that weakness of will is extremely rare, if not impossible. It is important to consider this implication because it raises a challenge to the proposed account. That is, one may take this implication as evidence against the proposed account of weakness of will. Thus, it is critical to the viability of the proposed account to deal with this challenge. This will be the task of section 4; where I will address

some possible lines of defence. I will end section 4 with outlining what the results of considering the implication(s) of the conjoint view suggest to those advocates of my account who give a positive response to the methodological question mentioned above.

The findings indicate the following. It is not obvious that this implication is problematic or embarrassing at all. Even if we accept it is problematic, it would not by itself be sufficient to undermine my proposed account of weakness of will. Further, the combination of the proposed account and Humeanism does not necessarily yield this implication. That is because there are some versions of Humeanism, for instance, Smith's idealising account and Schroeder's *Hypotheticalism*, that do not have this implication when they are conjoined with my account of weakness of will.

With respect to the methodological question mentioned above, whether these results are in favour of Humeanism depend on whether this implication is regarded as interesting or problematic. If it is viewed as interesting, it may be treated in favour of broadly Proportionalist Humeanism. However, if it is regarded as problematic, it may be taken as a consideration for preferring Smith's idealising account or Schroeder's *Hypotheticalism*, but not broadly Proportionalist Humeanism.

### **Section 1. The Humean Theory of Reasons**

Broadly speaking, the Humean theory of reasons is a view seeking to explain all the agent's normative reasons in terms of her psychological states. To better understand this, take the following example. The fact that there is a "Body Shop" party at my friend's house this evening might be a reason for me to go

there if I am interested in Body Shop products, or if I enjoy such parties. However, it may not be a reason for one who is not interested in Body Shop products, or does not like such parties. If so, this implies that while something is a reason for one person to act in a certain way, it might not be a reason for another one. As an explanation, Humeanism refers to agents' psychology. According to this theory, agents' reasons differ since agents have distinctive psychology; that is, they are "respective" in terms of, for instance, what they want, care about, and so on (Schroeder, 2007, pp. 1-2).<sup>81</sup>

For the sake of argument, take "desire" as the pro-attitude in virtue of which normative reasons are explained. This means that when the agent has a desire to do a certain action, this desire, according to Humeanism, provides her with grounds for having a normative reason to perform this action. If so, this idea would provoke a question.

To see what the question is, the agent might simultaneously have two conflicting desires whose objects would be promoted by taking incompatible actions (say, A and B).<sup>82</sup> In this case, a broadly Humean theory of reasons implies that there are at the same time two reasons for the agent: a reason to do A and a reason to do B, the reasons established by her corresponding desires. Looking back on the Body Shop example, suppose I am very interested in such products, thereby desiring to go to the party this evening. Then, there is a reason for me to do so, within a broadly Humean framework. However, I have

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<sup>81</sup> There is disagreement among different versions of Humeanism as to what counts as a reason for the agent to do an action, and how this reason should be explained. On some versions of Humeanism, the agent's mental states have to be at least part of what is a reason for her to do an action. However, Schroeder argues that the agent's psychological features are not part of her reason to perform an action. Instead, they help to explain why something is a reason for her (Schroeder, 2007, pp. 23-30).

<sup>82</sup> They are incompatible actions in a sense that the agent cannot simultaneously do them.

an exam tomorrow; and I know that if I stay in and study this evening, I will more likely get a good result. Since the result of this exam is very important for me, I have a desire to do well in my exam. This means there is, on broad Humeanism, a reason for me to stay in and study. In this case, I then have two conflicting reasons.

When the agent simultaneously has some reasons in favour of some opposite courses of action, or some reasons both for and against doing a certain action, the question is what she ought to do; which course of action she ought to take. In response, it is widely accepted that what the agent ought to do is a matter of the weight of reasons. That is, the agent ought to take the action for which she has a stronger or weightier reason (or set of reasons). This means that the agent needs to weigh the reasons she has for and against each option to realise which reason (or set of reasons) is weightiest.

This in turn raises the question of what determines the weight of reasons. In what follows, I briefly explain a theory of weighting labelled *Proportionalism*, the view that might be treated as the standard way of understanding the weight of reasons, within a Humean framework. It is particularly important to focus attention on *Proportionalism* because broadly Proportionalist Humean account appears to generate a problem for the proposed account of weakness of will.

## **Section 2. Proportionalism**

The standard Humean approach to the weight of reasons is what Schroeder terms *Proportionalism*. It is “the thesis that when a reason is explained by a desire, [...], its weight varies in proportion to the strength of that desire, and to how well the action promotes that desire” (Schroeder, 2007, p. 98).

To apply Proportionalism to the Body Shop case, there are, as previously explained, two reasons for me. On the one hand, there is a reason for me to go to the party; on the other hand, there is a reason for me to stay in and study. Given that both actions would promote the object of my desires to the same extent, the weight of my reasons relies on the strength of desire explaining the corresponding reason. That is, my reason to stay in and study would be stronger (or weightier) than my reason to go to the party, just in case my desire to do well in the exam is stronger than my desire to go to the party.

To exemplify the significance of the other determinant (namely, how well a certain action would promote the desire explaining a given reason), suppose that the agent strongly desires to walk on the Sun. To do so, she needs to first invent a wide range of materials resisting heat and radiation produced by the Sun. Then, she requires to construct a spacecraft and all other vital pieces of equipment. However, no one is happy to intellectually and financially help her in taking these preliminaries. Hence she should do it all on her own. In order that she would be able just to begin this business, she has to lose all her money, thereby being homeless and living rough. Further, she knows that even if she could manage to start doing this project, she would not have enough money to accomplish it, thereby failing to promote the object of her desire.

Given the agent's desire, this desire, on broad Humeanism, establishes a reason for her to take all those preliminaries. In this case, although the agent has a strong desire, it does not, on the Proportionalist picture, follow that her reason explained by this desire is strong (or weighty). That is because she knows that even if she takes all those preliminaries, she would not have enough money to accomplish this project, thereby failing to achieve her end after all.

Hence doing those preliminaries would have no significant consequence for promoting the object of her desire. Thus, she does not have a strong reason to take those preliminaries, from a Proportionalist perspective.

It has been mentioned that the weight of reasons is, on Proportionalism, a matter of the contribution of two factors, namely, the strength of the desire explaining a reason and the extent to which this desire would be promoted by taking a proposed action. This view may raise the question of how exactly to specify the contribution of these two components to the weight of reasons. This is an interesting question; however, it is beyond the scope of this work to pursue this issue. To keep our discussion manageable, I put aside cases where the agent needs to figure out the balance between the strength of the desire explaining a given reason and the extent to which the object of this desire might be promoted in order to determine whether this reason is weightier than the alternative.

Having gained a basic understanding of Proportionalism, let us turn back to the question of which course of action the agent ought to take when actions open to her are incompatible and the agent has some reason(s) in favor of each action. In response, it has been assumed, as is widely accepted, that the agent ought to do the action for which her reason (or set of reasons) is weightier. In this case, when the agent performs the action for which her reason is weightier (or stronger) than the alternative, I take it that she acts with a sufficiently weighty (or good enough) normative reason.

If we hold Proportionalism and the view that what the agent ought to do is a matter of the weight of reasons, it follows that when the agent has some

reasons for taking two conflicting actions, she ought to act in accordance with the reason grounded by her stronger desire, given that both courses of action for which the agent has reasons would equally promote or stand a chance of promoting the agent's corresponding desires. This is because the reason explained by the stronger desire is, according to Proportionalism, weightier or stronger than the alternative, all other things being equal.<sup>83</sup>

If the agent ought to do the action for which her desire explaining the corresponding reason is stronger, this seems to provoke a challenge for the proposed view of weakness of will. Clarifying the challenge is the topic of the next section.

### **Section 3. A Challenge from Broadly Proportionalist Humeanism**

I have suggested that weakness of will arises when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough (or sufficiently weighty) normative reason. When this view of weakness of will is combined with broadly Proportionalist Humean theory of reasons, the conjoint view implies that weakness of will hardly ever occurs, if at all.

This implication arises because in many cases where the agent takes an action contrary to her practical commitment(s), this performed action promotes at least one of the agent's desires. In such cases, the agent very often not only has a strong desire to do the taken action but also this desire is stronger than her desire for acting in accordance with her prior practical commitment(s).

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<sup>83</sup> In this context, the term "all other things being equal" includes the idea that the agent's two conflicting desires would to the same degree be promoted by the proposed corresponding actions.

Further, the taken action (namely, the action done contrary to her practical commitment(s)) would most often quite successfully promote the corresponding desire, which is stronger than the alternative. Then, since the agent takes the action for which she has the stronger desire, this implies that her reason for doing the performed action is, on a Proportionalist picture, stronger or weightier than the reason the agent has for doing the alternative. In this case where she acts in accordance with her weightier reason, I take it that she acts with a good enough normative reason. If so, this means she does not, on the conjoint picture, show weakness of will in withdrawing (or acting against) her practical commitment(s).

To illustrate this implication, suppose the agent has a desire to lose weight. Since she knows that abstaining from eating fattening food would result in (or at least stand a chance of) promoting the object of this desire, she intends to do so. However, she later passes a bakery. The smell of fresh cookies triggers a strong desire to have some. This desire is so much stronger than her desire to lose weight that it leads her to buy and eat some cookies although she knows that they are fattening. In doing so, the agent withdraws (or abandons) her practical commitment made by her original intention to refrain from eating fattening food.<sup>84</sup> Given that her desire to try fresh cookies is stronger than her desire to lose weight, this means that her reason explained by her desire to eat cookies is, on broadly Proportionalist Humeanism, stronger (or weightier) than her reason established by her desire to lose weight, all other things being equal. If that is right, it follows that the agent does not, on the conjoint view, show weakness of will despite withdrawing her practical commitment. That is

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<sup>84</sup> Even if it is claimed that in this case, the agent might make an exception to her original intention, this would not undermine the fact that she withdraws her practical commitment.

because she acts as she does in accordance with her weightier reason, from a broadly Proportionalist Humean perspective.

If that is the case, the conjoint view appears to have the implication that weakness of will, as I understand it, is extremely rare, if not impossible. Then, my opponent who deems this implication problematic may take it as evidence that my proposed account of weakness of will is not plausible. This is because when it is conjoined with Humeanism, as a prominent theory of reasons, it yields this problematic and unwelcome implication. In reaction to this challenge, the next section sets out to provide some answers.

#### **Section 4. Responses to the Challenge from Broadly Proportionalist Humeanism**

There are some possible responses to the challenge under consideration; and they can be divided into two main categories. One is to admit that if an advocate of the proposed account of weakness of will adopts broadly Proportionalist Humeanism, she would end up deeming cases of weakness of will extremely rare, if not impossible. The other is to deny that the combination of the proposed account and the Humean theory of reasons necessarily gives rise to this implication. Further, in each category, there are at least two ways to react. In the rest of this section, I explain all four possible lines of defense.

##### **I. First Category**

###### **i. To be an interesting implication**

The first response is to admit that the conjunction of my proposed account and broadly Proportionalist Humeanism yields this implication, but to take it to be

interesting, and not embarrassing or problematic at all. We may regard it as interesting that it turns out that weakness of will is extremely rare, if not impossible. That is, in many cases where the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s), she, on broadly Proportionalist Humeanism, has a sufficiently weighty normative reason for acting as she does, thereby not showing weakness of will.

## **ii. To be insufficient evidence**

The second response is to confess that this is the implication of the conjoint view, and to admit that this is embarrassing for the conjoint view. Nonetheless, it is not obvious that the problem is because of the inadequacy of my proposed account of weakness of will. In other words, this implication is not by itself conclusive evidence against the plausibility of the proposed account. Rather, an anti-Humean may claim that the guilt for this implication lies in the implausibility of broadly Proportionalist Humeanism.

To clarify, this defender of the proposed account may claim that it is legitimate to take as a consideration in favour of a theory of reasons that it has the right implication about our intuitive judgements. However, broadly Proportionalist Humeanism fails to fit nicely with our intuitive verdict on whether the agent has a sufficiently weighty normative reason to do a certain action. For example, if a person has a strong desire to hammer her/his head on to a wall, (s)he would, on broadly Proportionalist Humeanism, have a sufficiently weighty reason to do the desired action. However, it does not intuitively seem that this desire would, all other things being equal, give her/him a sufficiently weighty normative reason to take the corresponding

action, the reason justifying the action of hammering her/his head on to the wall. Then, the fact that broadly Proportionalist Humeanism fails to make sense of our intuitions about the agent's reason might be taken as evidence that there are flaws in broadly Proportionalist Humeanism, the defects resulting in the implication that weakness of will hardly ever arises, if at all. Then, this implication is embarrassing for broadly Proportionalist Humeanism, but not my proposed account of weakness of will.

## **II. Second Category**

There are at least two further lines of defense against the challenge under consideration. One is to adopt a restricted version of Humeanism;<sup>85</sup> and the other is to take a non-Proportionalist approach to the weight of reasons. They seem promising since they provide grounds for avoiding the implication under consideration. In what follows, I explain these two possible escape routes in turn.

### **i. A restricted version of Humeanism**

To avoid the implication that weakness of will is extremely rare, if not impossible, one way open for Humeans who have adopted the proposed account of weakness of will is the following. The Humean theory of reasons, as previously mentioned, aspires to account for the agent's normative reasons by referring to her psychological features. In doing so, some Humeans impose some restrictions on the psychological states establishing reasons. They hold, for example, that not all desires are adequate to serve as grounding reasons, but

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<sup>85</sup> The label "restricted version of Humeanism", as explained later, refers to those versions of Humeanism that impose restrictions of some sort or other on the psychological features explaining normative reasons.

only those desires that, for instance, survive in *reflective equilibrium*<sup>86</sup> (Schroeder, 2007, p. 85).

If that is the case, it seems promising. That is because even if those Humeans who adopt a restricted version take Proportionalism as the theory of weighting, the combination of a restricted Proportionalist Humean view with the proposed account of weakness of will may not have the implication at issue. This is because at least in some cases where the agent (say) withdraws (or acts against) her practical commitment(s) due to promoting a strong desire explaining the reason for which she acts as she does, this desire might fail to persist in the process of *reflective equilibrium*. This failure implies that the reason in question is not, on the restricted version of Humeanism, associated with a normative reason at all. Thus, in such cases, the agent withdraws (or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason, thereby manifesting weakness of will, as I understand it.

To get a clear picture of this way of avoiding the implication that weakness of will hardly ever occurs, I shall sketch Michael Smith's view of normative reasons (1994).

### **Smith's idealising account**

Smith characterises normative reasons in terms of the hypothetical desires that the agent would have if she were ideally or fully rational. In other words, whether the agent has a normative reason to do X is not a matter of her actual

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<sup>86</sup> The term "*reflective equilibrium*" is borrowed from John Rawls (1951). It refers to the conclusion(s) of a deliberative process in which we deliberate on and adapt our beliefs so that we make them more coherent (Daniels, 2016, Sec. 1; Sec. 2). Although Rawls' discussion focuses on how to find a *reflective equilibrium* among our beliefs, Smith holds that the process of systematic justification can yield a *reflective equilibrium* among our desires (Smith, 1994, p. 159).

desires, but her hypothetical ones. According to Smith's idealising account, the agent has a normative reason to do X in some circumstances (C) only in case she would want to do X in those circumstances (C) if she were fully rational (Smith, 1994, p. 182).

It is worth noting that what Smith has in mind by "circumstances" includes not only the external world but also psychological features such as preferences, values, tastes and so on. Further, the agent would not be "fully rational" unless she meets the following conditions (Smith 1994, p. 156; p. 183; Wiland, 2012, p. 101).

The agent ought not to have any false beliefs;<sup>87</sup> she ought to be well informed and have all relevant beliefs in her mind. Further, to be fully rational, the agent must, Smith holds, not be under the effects of addiction, compulsion, depression or any emotional distraction. Moreover, being fully rational requires rational deliberation; where "rational deliberation" entails realising the ways of achieving our aims and adopting the means to our ends, *inter alia*.

In the process of rational deliberation, providing grounds for achieving *reflective equilibrium* among the agent's desires, the well-informed agent starts from her standing desires. Then, she tries to make them *systematically justifiable*, in Smith's terminology. That is, she considers whether her various desires are coherent and unified; and whether they can be more unified by, for example, dropping some desires and desiring some other objects. To the extent that the agent makes her desires more coherent and unified, to that extent they

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<sup>87</sup> "To have no false beliefs" may seem to some unnecessarily strong. However, Smith takes it as one of the conditions that the agent must meet in order to be fully rational (Smith, 1994, p. 156).

would be more systematically justifiable; and she would, to that degree, be more rational (Smith 1994, pp. 155-161; Wiland, 2012, pp. 96-102).

### **Combining Smith's idealising version of Humeanism with the proposed account**

It follows from Smith's view that when the agent has a desire to do a certain action in some circumstances, this desire is adequate to establish a normative reason for the agent to do the action in question just in case the agent would want to do this action in those circumstances if she were ideally rational. This means if ceasing the desire under consideration causes the agent's whole set of desires to be more coherent and unified, the desire in question would not survive in *reflective equilibrium*. Then, this desire is not, for Smith, sufficient to provide grounds for constituting a normative reason for the agent, no matter how strong this desire is, or how likely the action under consideration is to promote this desire.

If that is the case, it looks promising for the proposed account of weakness of will. That is because when Smith's idealising version of Humeanism is combined with my proposed account, the conjoint view seems to be likely to avoid the implication that weakness of will is extremely rare, if not impossible. That is because at least in many cases where the agent (say) withdraws (or acts against) her practical commitment(s) due to feeling a desire to act as she does, this desire might not be systematically justifiable, thereby not surviving in the process of *reflective equilibrium*. That is, the agent would not have it if she were ideally or fully rational. As a result, the desire under consideration is not sufficient to give the agent a normative reason justifying the action she does.

Then, she withdraws (or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason, thereby showing weakness of will, as I conceive it. If that is right, it then appears that cases of weakness of will are not as rare as they initially seemed to be.

To take an example, suppose the agent is a committed Christian whose substantial desire is to make her set of values, intentions, goals and rules of conduct in accordance with the doctrine of Christianity. This desire leads her to constitute a set of desires such that it would be justifiable, within Christianity's framework. For instance, this fundamental desire results in deriving a desire to abstain from committing adultery subsequent to learning that this action is, on Christianity's picture, wrong and sinful. She then intends never to commit it. Nevertheless, she later feels a strong desire to have extramarital sex. At that time, this desire is so much stronger than her desire to act in accordance with Bible teaching that she abandons her practical commitment to never committing adultery; and she embarks on taking the desired action.

In this case, although the agent's desire to have extramarital sex is much stronger than the alternative, it does not, on Smith's picture, follow that the agent's reason for acting as she does is stronger or weightier than her reason to avoid taking the action she does. That is because her desire to have extramarital sex would not survive in *reflective equilibrium* since it does not well fit with her whole set of desires and psychological states in general. Rather, her set of desires would be more coherent and unified in the absence of the desire to have extramarital sex.

If it is correct that the agent's desire explaining the reason for which she acts is not systematically justifiable, thereby failing to survive in *reflective equilibrium*, this means the agent withdraws (or abandons) her practical commitment without a sufficiently weighty normative reason. Thus, she, on the conjoint view, exhibits weakness of will in doing the action promoting her desire for having extramarital sex.

Having explained Smith's idealising account, as one possible version of Humeanism which does not yield the implication at issue, I move on to another possible escape route.

## **ii. A non-Proportionalist approach to the weight of reasons**

A further way of avoiding the challenge under consideration is open to those Humeans who accept that weakness of will is a matter of withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. To see what this is, it is worth highlighting that the implication of broad Humeanism for the proposed account of weakness of will results from the idea on which Proportionalism is based. More specifically, it stems from the view that the weight of a reason is determined by the strength of the desire explaining the reason, and the degree to which a certain action would promote this desire. This view about the strength of reasons implies that when the agent's desire explaining a given reason is stronger than the alternative and this desire is likely to be promoted by doing a certain action, the agent has a strong reason to take this action. When this view is taken in conjunction with the proposed account of weakness of will, it suggests that

weakness of will is extremely rare, if not impossible. To illustrate this implication, I have earlier offered the fattening food example (in section 3).

If this implication results from the Proportionalist theory of the weight of reasons, it might be possible to prevent this implication by adopting a different theory of weighting. In other words, what might help us to get off the hook is a version of Humeanism that denies Proportionalism and instead takes a non-Proportionalist approach to the weight of reasons.

If that is right, it seems promising since there may be a way to do so. This is because Mark Schroeder in his highly influential book, *Slaves of the Passions* (2007), not only rejects Proportionalism but also offers a non-Proportionalist Humean account of weighting, inter alia. In that book, he introduces a version of the Humean theory of reasons called *Hypotheticalism*. Although this view as a version of Humeanism aspires to explain the agent's reasons in terms of her desires<sup>88</sup>, Schroeder does not base the weight of reasons on the strength of the desires explaining reasons and the extent to which the desires grounding reasons would be promoted. Instead, he proposes a novel approach to explaining the weight of reasons. Schroeder holds that the weight of reasons is a normative matter in the sense that it is not determined by how the agent actually puts weight on a given reason. Rather, it depends on whether it is correct to put weight on it (Schroeder, 2007, pp. 100-101; p. 129).<sup>89</sup> In what follows, I shall outline Schroeder's theory of weighting.

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<sup>88</sup> Schroeder characterises agents' reasons in the following way:

"Reason\*": For all propositions  $r$ , agents  $x$ , and actions  $a$ , if  $r$  is a reason for  $x$  to do  $a$ , that is because there is some  $p$  such that  $x$  has a desire whose object is  $p$ , and the truth of  $r$  is part of what explains why  $x$ 's doing  $a$  promotes  $p$ ." (Schroeder, 2007, p. 29)

<sup>89</sup> For more arguments for and against *Proportionalism*, see Evers (2013), Rieder (2016) and Schroeder (2007).

### Schroeder's theory of the weight of reasons

Schroeder accepts the view that what the agent ought to do, whether or not she ought to take, say, A, is a matter of the weight of reasons she has for and against doing A. The agent ought to do A just in case the set of all reasons ( $R_1$ ) there are for her to do A outweighs the set of all reasons ( $R_2$ ) there are for her not to take A (Schroeder, 2007, p. 122; p. 130).<sup>90</sup> However, his non-Proportionalist account differs from Proportionalism in terms of what makes a reason (or a set of reasons) ( $R_1$ ) weightier than the alternative ( $R_2$ ).

On the view Schroeder develops,  $R_1$  is weightier than  $R_2$  only if it is correct to put more weight on it than on  $R_2$  in deliberation about whether to do A (Schroeder, 2007, pp. 129-130).<sup>91</sup> Correctness is, on Schroeder's view, specified in terms of the right kind of reasons. That is, not all reasons there are for the agent are eligible to be taken into account. Rather, only reasons of the right kind bear on determining the weight of reasons there are for the agent for and against taking a certain action (Schroeder, 2007, p. 134).

To understand Schroeder's notion of "the right kind of reasons", it is essential to first point out that the right and wrong kinds of reasons are, for Schroeder, determined with respect to the activity within which they are reasons. For any given activity, the right kind of reasons are ones shared by everyone involved in this activity; anyone engaged in this activity would have those reasons in virtue of being involved in this activity (Schroeder, 2007, pp.

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<sup>90</sup> To put it in Schroeder's terms, "Ought: For it to be the case that  $X$  ought to do  $A$  is for it to be the case that  $S_{X,A} > S_{X,\sim A}$ ". Where  $S_{X,A}$  stands for the set of all reasons to do A; and  $S_{X,\sim A}$  represents the set of all reasons not to do A; and ">" symbolizes "the weightier-than relation" (2007, p. 130).

<sup>91</sup> In Schroeder's own words, "Attractive Idea: For  $R$  to be a weightier set of reasons to do  $A$  than  $S$  ( $R > S$ ) is for it to be correct to place more weight on  $R$  than on  $S$  in deliberation about whether to do  $A$ " (2007, p. 130).

134-135).<sup>92</sup> By contrast, reasons of the wrong kind are reasons only for some of those engaged in this activity, but not all of them. This implies that the *idiosyncratic* reasons are, on Schroeder view, of the wrong kind since they are not reasons applied to all involved in this activity (Schroeder, 2010, p. 36).

To clarify, consider the activity of driving. According to driving law, all drivers, except firefighters, ambulance workers and police officers who are called to an emergency, are required to stop when the traffic lights are red. Putting aside the exceptional cases, the fact that driving law requires drivers to stop at a red light gives them a reason to do so. It is a reason for all of them engaged in the activity of driving. Then, this is the right kind of reason. Some drivers may, nonetheless, have some idiosyncratic reasons, the reasons not shared by all drivers. Suppose a driver is late. Nevertheless, he wishes to be on time and believes he can be so if he does not stop at the traffic lights on his way. In this case, the driver may have a reason to run the lights. However, this is the wrong kind of reason since it is not applied to all drivers.

To summarise what has been mentioned so far about Schroeder's view, whether the agent ought to do a certain action (A) for which there is a reason for her ( $R_1$ )<sup>93</sup> rests on the weight of  $R_1$ . She ought to take A only in case  $R_1$  is weightier than  $R_2$ ; where  $R_2$  stands for the reason there is for the agent to do the alternative.  $R_1$  outweighs  $R_2$  only if it is correct to put more weight on  $R_1$  than on  $R_2$ . It is, on Schroeder's picture, correct to put more weight on  $R_1$  than on  $R_2$  just in case the set of all the right kind of reasons to put more weight on

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<sup>92</sup> Schroeder's formulation of the right kind of reasons is the following. "Right Kind of Reasons: The right kind of reasons to do *A* are reasons that are shared by everyone engaged in the activity of doing *A*, such that the fact that they are engaged in doing *A* is sufficient to explain why these are reasons for them" (2007, p. 135).

<sup>93</sup> "A reason" refers to a single reason or a set of reasons.

$R_1$  outweighs the set of all the right kind of reasons not to put more weight on  $R_1$ ; where the right kind of reasons are those shared by everyone involved in the relevant activity just because they are engaged in that activity.

In the case where the agent is deliberating what to do, whether to do A, the relevant activity is deliberation. Then, with respect to this activity, the reasons of the right kind are, Schroeder holds, the alleged agent-neutral reasons.<sup>94</sup> That is because agent-neutral reasons are, by definition, taken to be reasons for everyone. Hence everyone engaged in this activity has these reasons.

If that is right, it then follows that the agent-neutral reasons there are for and against putting more weight on  $R_1$  are of the right kind to be taken into account of determining the weight of  $R_1$ . By contrast, the agent's *idiosyncratic* reasons for and against putting less weight on  $R_1$  are the wrong kind of reasons. That is because *idiosyncratic* reasons do not apply to everyone involved in the corresponding activity. Thus, they are irrelevant to determining how weighty  $R_1$  is (Schroeder, 2007, p. 142).

To illustrate Schroeder's theory of weighting, consider a case where the agent's neighbour needs help. Suppose the agent has a desire such that helping her neighbour would promote the object of that desire. This means there is a reason (say, Z) for the agent to help her neighbour, given Schroeder's characterisation of reason.<sup>95</sup> While knowing that she is able to provide the help

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<sup>94</sup> An agent-neutral reason is characterised as a reason for every one, and not just for some one(s) (Schroeder, 2007, p. 104).

<sup>95</sup> On *Hypotheticalism*, "Reason\*: For all propositions  $r$ , agents  $x$ , and actions  $a$ , if  $r$  is a reason for  $x$  to do  $a$ , that is because there is some  $p$  such that  $x$  has a desire whose object is  $p$ , and the truth of  $r$  is part of what explains why  $x$ 's doing  $a$  promotes  $p$ ." (Schroeder, 2007, p. 29)

needed, the agent engages in deliberation about what she ought to do, whether to help her neighbour.

The agent ought, on Schroeder's picture, to take the action for which there is a reason (Z) for her only if Z is weightier than the reason (say,  $\sim Z$ ) there is for her to do the opposite course of action; and Z is weightier than  $\sim Z$  just in case it is correct to put more weight on Z than on  $\sim Z$  in deliberation about whether to help her neighbour. It is correct to put more weight on Z than on  $\sim Z$  only in case the set of all reasons of the right kind there are for the agent to put more weight on Z outweighs the set of all reasons of the right kind there are for the agent not to put more weight on Z. When the agent is deliberating to figure out what to do, whether to help her neighbour, the activity in which the agent has involved is the activity of deliberation.

In the case under consideration, there is a reason for the agent to place more weight on Z. That is because the fact that one needs help is, according to Schroeder, a reason for everyone, who can help her/him, to provide the help needed. In other words, it is deemed to be an agent-neutral reason (Schroeder, 2007, p. 142). Then, there is an agent-neutral reason to place more weight on Z. Nonetheless, suppose the agent cannot stand her neighbour; and the fact that she hates her neighbour is a reason for her not to place more weight on Z. However, this reason is, in Schroeder's terminology, an *idiosyncratic* one due to the fact that it applies just to the agent.<sup>96</sup> Since it is not shared by everyone involved in the relevant activity, it is not a reason of the right kind. By contrast, since the fact that one needs help is an (alleged) agent-neutral reason applied to

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<sup>96</sup> For a similar example in which Schroeder takes "the fact that one needs help" as an agent-neutral reason and "the fact that the agent cannot stand one" as an *idiosyncratic* reason, see Schroeder (2007, p. 142).

everyone who engages in the activity under consideration, it is a reason of the right kind.

If that is right, this means that there is, on the one hand, an agent-neutral reason to put more weight on Z; and on the other hand, there is an *idiosyncratic* reason for the agent not to put more weight on Z. However, the reason there is for the agent to place more weight on Z is a reason of the right kind, whereas the reason there is for her not to put more weight on Z is not. This implies that the set of reasons of the right kind there are for the agent to put more weight on Z is weightier than the set of reasons of the right kind there are for her not to place more weight on Z. That is because the set of reasons of the right kind there are for her to put more weight on Z is not empty, but the set of reasons of the right kind there are for the agent not to place more weight on Z is empty.<sup>97</sup> It then follows that it is correct to put more weight on Z. Consequently, the agent ought to take the action for which Z is a reason. That is, she ought to help her neighbour.

Having outlined Schroeder's theory of the weight of reasons, it is worth mentioning two issues. First, although Schroeder's account of weighting has attracted some criticisms<sup>98</sup>, I do not wish to enter into debate over the viability of his theory of reasons' weight. Rather, I take it for granted that his account is at least minimally plausible. It is not just a logically possible account, but a view that it is worth taking seriously.

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<sup>97</sup> According to Schroeder, "[... o]ne way for set of reasons *A* to be weightier than set of reasons *B* is for set *B* to be empty, but *A* non-empty." (Schroeder, 2007, p. 138)

<sup>98</sup> For discussion of some problems with which Schroeder's theory of weighting might face, see Enoch (2011), Rieder (2016) and Shackel (2014).

Second, we have considered that the right and wrong kinds of reasons are determined in terms of the relevant activity. This implies that when the agent engages in the activity of deliberating about whether to put more weight on a reason she has (say, X), the right kind of reasons to determine whether to place more weight on X are agent-neutral reasons, but not *idiosyncratic* ones. That is because *idiosyncratic* reasons do not apply to all agents engaged in the activity at issue. This means *idiosyncratic* reasons the agent has for and against placing more weight on X are not appropriate to be taken into account.

Although the plausibility of the above mentioned ideas can be questioned, I do not wish to do so. Instead, I would like to make a point concerning the implication arising from conjoining the Hypotheticalist theory of weighting, as it stands, and my proposed account of weakness of will.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that even if we grant Schroeder's ideas mentioned above, his account of weighting is not complete. That is because it does not provide us with everything that we need in order to determine what an agent ought to do. Nor is it applicable to every single case. To make clear why this is so, note that Schroeder's theory does not, as he acknowledges (2010, p. 48), spell out how we can know in a given case, exactly what the relevant activity is, the activity to which we must refer in order to determine whether a given reason is of the right kind. Moreover, we need to know how to figure out the reasons shared by everyone involved in a given activity. What is more, even though Schroeder provides us with more details about how to identify the relevant activity and the right kind of reasons entailed in the activity in question, his account is not applicable to every possible case. There might, as Schroeder admits, be some activities that are not associated with a reason or a

set of reasons shared by every agent engaged in activities in question (Schroeder, 2010, pp. 38-39). In these cases, it is not clear how his account might work.

Having said that Schroeder's account of the weight of reasons appears to be incomplete, it is worth highlighting that this does not mean that it fails to serve my purpose, namely, to defend weakness of will, as I understand it, against the challenge at issue.

### **Combining Hypotheticalism with the proposed account**

To clarify why Hypotheticalism seems promising for the proposed account of weakness of will, we have considered that Hypotheticalism does not tie the weight of reasons directly to the strength of desires grounding reasons or to the degree to which the desires explaining the corresponding reasons would be promoted. Rather, the weight of a reason (or set of reasons), on this view, rests on whether it is correct to put more weight on it than on an alternative; where the correctness of placing more weight on this reason is specified in terms of the right kind of reasons there are for the agent. This implies that Hypotheticalism lacks the problematic feature of broadly Proportionalist Humeanism, namely, the Proportionalist account of weighting. It is suspected to be a problematic feature since the implication that weakness of will is extremely rare, if not impossible, stems from Proportionalism. Since Hypotheticalism does not take a Proportionalist approach to weighting reasons, the combination of Hypotheticalism and the proposed account of weakness of will is unlikely to give rise to the implication under consideration.

To make this clear, take a case where the agent has a reason (R) for doing an action (A). We have considered that not all reasons that there are for the agent are, on Schroeder's theory, of the right kind to determine whether to place more weight on a given reason the agent has (R) for doing the action (A) than on an alternative ( $\sim R$ ). If that is right, there might be cases where there is some reason of the right kind not to put more weight on R. Given that there is no other reason of the right kind for placing more weight on R, this means it is not correct to put more weight on R; hence R is not a sufficiently weighty reason, no matter how strong the agent's desire explaining R is or how well A would promote the desire under consideration. Thus, the agent ought, on Schroeder's picture, not to take A.

Nonetheless, suppose the agent does A for the reason R; and in doing so, she withdraws (or acts against) her practical commitment(s). In this case, the agent, on the proposed account conjoined with Hypotheticalism, displays weakness of will since she withdraws (or acts against) her practical commitment(s) while the reason (R) for which she acts as she does is not, as explained above, sufficiently weighty (or good enough). This implies that when Hypotheticalism is combined with the proposed account of weakness of will, cases of weakness of will may not be either impossible or as rare as the challenge initially supposed them to be.

Suppose that the agent intends never to kill anyone. Further, assume she feels intense passionate love for one of her male colleagues. However, she is not the only person who has this feeling. Rather, one of her female colleagues feels love for him as well. This leads the agent to make an enemy of her female colleague. The agent knows that she would be well rid of her female colleague

in her relationship with him. Since the agent strongly desires to improve her relationship with him, this desire establishes a reason (R) for her to put an end to her female colleague (A). Then, she abandons her practical commitment made by her intention not to murder anyone, and proceeds to kill her (A).

In this case, although her strong desire to improve her relationship with him provides the agent with a reason to kill her female colleague, this reason (R) is not, on Schroeder's picture, sufficiently weighty. To clarify why, there is, I believe, an agent-neutral reason not to murder. If so, since this reason is, by definition, applied to everyone, this is a reason of the right kind not to place more weight on the reason (R) the agent has to kill her female colleague (A). This implies that it is not correct to put more weight on this reason (R), given that there is no reason of the right kind in favour of putting more weight on R. Consequently, R is not sufficiently weighty to justify the agent's action of killing her female colleague. Thus, she, on the combination of the proposed account with Hypotheticalism, manifests weakness of will due to withdrawing (abandoning or acting against) her practical commitment without a sufficiently weighty normative reason.

Having considered the implication of conjoining the proposed account of weakness of will and the Humean theory of reasons, I shall outline what the results suggest.

### **III. The Upshot of the Considered Implication for the Humean Theory of Reasons**

Having combined my proposed account with broadly Proportionalist Humeanism, this conjoint view yields the implication that weakness of will is

extremely rare, if not impossible. To deal with this challenging implication, I have first mentioned that this implication can be deemed interesting, but not problematic. Second, even if it is problematic, it will not be by itself conclusive evidence against my proposed account. Further, there are some versions of Humeanism, such as Smith's idealising and Schroeder's Hypotheticalist accounts, that avoid this implication when they are combined with the proposed account.

Conjoining the proposed account of weakness of will with Humeanism and considering the implication of this conjoint view provoke the following methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to take account of the results of considering the implication of this conjoint view in deciding whether a Humean theory of reasons is plausible. If there is any advocate of my proposed account who gives a positive answer to this methodological question, the results of this section suggest the following to her/him.

If this implication is viewed as interesting, it may be taken as a consideration in favour of broadly Proportionalist Humeanism. If it is deemed problematic, it may be treated as evidence against broadly Proportionalist Humeanism and to support the idea that some versions of Humeanism, such as Smith's idealising account and Schroeder's Hypotheticalism, are superior to broadly Proportionalist Humeanism.

## **Section 5. Conclusion**

This chapter has shown what happens when my proposed account of weakness of will is conjoined with the Humean theory of normative reasons. The first section has thrown light on how a broadly Humean theory accounts for

reasons. Then, I have discussed Proportionalism, a theory of weighting taken to be a natural way of weighting reasons where reasons are explained by referring to agents' psychological states. It has particularly been interesting and important to consider Proportionalism since the combination of broadly Proportionalist Humeanism and the proposed account of weakness of will gives rise to the implication that weakness of will hardly ever occurs, if ever at all. This implication has raised a challenge to my view of weakness of will. More precisely, an opponent could take it as evidence for the inadequacy of the proposed account.

In reaction to this challenge, I have provided several lines of defence. The first is to admit that the conjoint view yields this implication, but to take it as interesting. The second is to admit this implication, but to deny that this is by itself sufficient to prove my proposed account to be wrong. Further, I have made it clear that it is not the case that the combination of the proposed account and Humeanism necessarily yields this implication. Rather, there are at least two ways to prevent this implication. One is to take a restricted version of Humeanism, like Smith's idealising view. The other is to adopt a non-Proportionalist approach to the weight of reasons, like Schroeder's Hypotheticalist view. To show how these two theories avoid this implication, I have explained Smith's account and Schroeder's Hypotheticalist way of weighting reasons in turn.

Given these lines of response, the results indicate the following. First, even if we admit this implication, it is not obvious that it is necessarily problematic; rather, it might be interesting. Second, this implication need not undermine my proposed account of weakness of will. That is because this implication does not

by itself provide sufficient grounds for concluding that the proposed account is inadequate. Further, the combination of Humeanism and the proposed account does not necessarily imply that weakness of will hardly ever arises, if ever at all. Rather, there are some ways open for Humeans to avoid this implication while holding weakness of will to be a matter of withdrawing (or acting against) practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason.

It then follows that my proposal to understand weakness of will, which places great emphasis on taking account of practical reasons, *inter alia*, is at least minimally plausible when it is combined with the Humean theory of reasons since it does not yield any undercutting implication such that it would be conclusive evidence against the proposed account. Or at least, we have not found any to reject its plausibility.

To those advocates of the proposed account of weakness of will who give a positive answer to the methodological question mentioned in section 4 (subsection III), the results of considering the implication of the conjoint view at issue suggest the following. If the implication that weakness of will is extremely rare is deemed interesting, it may be taken as a consideration in favour of broadly Proportionalist Humeanism. If this implication is treated as being problematic, it may be taken as evidence against broadly Proportionalist Humeanism and to support the idea that Smith's idealising view and Schroeder's Hypotheticalism are superior to broadly Proportionalist Humeanism.

## **Chapter 7. The Implication(s) of Conjoining the Proposed Account of Weakness of Will with the Kantian Theory of Reasons**

This chapter examines what happens when my proposed account of weakness of will is combined with a Kantian theory of reasons; what the resulting conjoint view implies. Considering the implication(s) of the resulting conjoint view raises the following methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to take account of the results of considering the implication(s) of this conjoint view in deciding whether Kantianism is to be preferred to another theory of reasons. Suppose there are some advocates of my proposed account who believe the legitimacy of doing so. Then, considering the implication(s) of the conjoint view will in turn give those advocates some grounds for deciding whether to opt for Kantianism.

Since Kantian scholars might at least at some points have different interpretations of Kant's theory, my main focus will be on Korsgaard as a prominent Kantian whose view has attracted great attention in the literature.

The first section discusses the Kantian concept of reasons for action. I will address this issue since the agent's practical reason plays a crucial role in my account of weakness of will. On the Kantian theory, the categorical imperative is an "unconditional requirement" that we ought always to follow (Kant, 1998, p. xvii). In other words, we ought never to do the action whose maxim fails to comply with the categorical imperative. This means an action would, for Kantians, be permissible just in case its maxim is in conformity with the categorical imperative. Otherwise, it would be forbidden and the agent ought

not to act on this maxim (Kant, 1998, pp. xvi-xvii; p. xxi).<sup>99</sup> Clarifying why an action is permissible (or objectively good, in Korsgaard's terminology) just in case its maxim conforms to the categorical imperative is the purpose of the second section. The third section explains how to determine whether a given maxim complies with the categorical imperative by referring to the Formula of the Universal Law of Nature and the Formula of Humanity in turn. Finally, I will examine the implication(s) of the proposed account of weakness of will combined with the Kantian theory; I will also outline what the results of considering the implication(s) of the conjoint view suggest to those advocates of my account who give a positive response to the methodological question mentioned earlier.

The conjoint view, namely, the combination of the proposed account of weakness of will with Kantianism, yields two challenging implications: the Too Many Cases objection and the impossibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will. In response to the first difficulty, I will first suggest that the fact that too many cases might turn out to be cases of weakness of will is not necessarily problematic and embarrassing, but interesting. Second, if it is a problem, it is not by itself sufficient to prove the inadequacy of the proposed account of weakness of will. Thirdly, I will illustrate that it may not be the case that too many cases, on the conjoint picture, appear to be cases of weakness of will. To deal with the challenge based on inverse akrasia, I will examine the application of the conjoint view to Huckleberry Finn, as a case of inverse

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<sup>99</sup> As I will explain in section 4 (sub-section II), it is, on the Kantian picture, possible that the agent does what she has a duty to although the maxim on which she acts does not conform to the categorical imperative. In this case, the agent acts in a morally right way; however, since her maxim fails to comply with the categorical imperative, this maxim is one on which she ought not to act.

akrasia. Having done so, we will get a case in which Huck, on the conjoint view, exhibits weakness of will despite acting rightly. It then follows that it is not the case that the conjoint view yields the impossibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will.

The findings show that the two mentioned alleged implications fail to undermine the plausibility of the proposed account of weakness of will. Further, the results suggest that my general proposal for weakness of will, which refers to “good enough normative reason” in understanding weakness of will, is at least minimally plausible when it is combined with the Kantian theory of reasons, which is a predominant view about reasons. Or at least, we have not found any conclusive evidence to reject it.

As regards the methodological question, the results of considering the implications of the conjoint view suggest the following to those advocates of my proposed account who give a positive answer to the methodological question. With respect to the Too Many Cases objection, if these advocates treat this implication interesting, they may take it as a consideration in favour of Kantianism. If they deem it problematic, they may, on the face of it, be inclined to refer to it as evidence against the Kantian theory of reasons. However, it is not in fact the case that this apparent implication undercuts the plausibility of Kantianism. That is because cases of weakness of will are not, on the conjoint picture, as many as they initially seemed to be.

With respect to the implication that cases of inverse akrasia that are also cases of weakness of will seem impossible, it will be, as mentioned earlier, argued that there is, on the conjoint view, room for inverse akrasia as a case of

weakness of will. If so, those advocates of the proposed account who give a positive response to the methodological question may take it as a consideration in favour of Kantianism.

### **Section 1. Reasons for Action**

To understand the Kantian view of reasons for action, it is essential to first point out the distinction Kantians draw between reasons for an action and reasons for an act. On this view, actions differ from acts (Korsgaard, 2008, p. 220). The conception of action entails an act and an end, the end for the sake of which the act in question is done. To take a simple example, “killing a person” is, on this picture, taken as an act; and “killing a person to earn money” is considered as an action. The description of an action is, on the Kantian theory, formulated in the form of a principle Kant calls a “maxim”. As stated by Korsgaard, “the basic form of a Kantian maxim is “I will do act-A in order to promote end-E””; where A and E refer to act-type and end-type respectively (Korsgaard, 2008, pp. 217-219).

Consider the maxim “I will kill X in order to get money”. Given the distinction between acts and actions, the agent’s reason for an act is, according to Korsgaard, the end or aim for which the act is proposed while her reason for an action is its goodness; where “reason” is taken in motivating sense. To apply this to the maxim under consideration, the agent’s reason for the act of “killing X” is to get money; and her reason for the action of “killing X in order to earn money” is its goodness. On this picture, the agent chooses (or wills or intends) to perform a certain action because she takes it to be good or worthwhile to be done. It is worth noting that here “good” is to do with

whatever it is that makes the action appropriate to be performed in the agent's eyes. This does not mean that actions must be good in exactly the same way; rather, they might be good in some way or other. For instance, an action might seem good to the agent since she takes it to promote (or at least stand a chance of promoting) her desire whereas another might be seen as good by her due to improving her talents (Korsgaard, 2008, pp. 210-214; 2009, pp. 11-13).<sup>100</sup>

To clarify how the agent comes to choose an action due to seeing it as good, it is uncontroversial that the agent has various "incentives" including desires, inclinations, needs, interests and so on. An incentive of one sort or another may make her attracted to some end, thereby making her disposed to achieve that end. Then, the agent might either explicitly or implicitly come to the judgement that doing A (as an act) would promote or stand a chance of promoting E (the end under consideration). Since the agent has been motivated to pursue E, she takes E as her reason to do A. In the light of such considerations, the agent views this action as good (or appropriate or worth doing). It is good from the agent's perspective in the sense that she takes A-ing to be likely to bring about the object of her incentive. Having deemed the action good, the agent might choose (or will or intend) to do the action, if she wants to take any action at all. That is, she might come to the attitude that "I will do A to promote E"; and she takes it as a principle on the basis of which she would act at the time of action, a principle called her "maxim", in Kant's

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<sup>100</sup> It follows from the idea about the reasons for action that all actions are, on Korsgaard's picture, performed for the same reason, in the motivating sense; that is to be deemed good or worth doing by the agent in some way or other. Nevertheless, in ordinary language, when we ask for the agent's reason for doing a given action, Korsgaard holds, we indeed ask for a "description" or an "explication" of the action that makes it clear for us why the agent sees the action as a thing worth doing (Korsgaard, 2008, pp. 221-222).

terminology (Korsgaard, 2008, pp. 217-219; pp. 225-226; 2009, pp. 11-13; Herman, 1993, pp. 215-217).<sup>101</sup>

Given this view of the process of the choice of action, it is worth highlighting two points. First, the agent, on Kantians' picture, chooses an "action", but not just a certain act. Second, although the agent might first be motivated to some end by her nature as a reaction to her circumstances, her choice of action is not just a reaction to her incentive. Rather she actively chooses the action in response to what she sees as its goodness (Korsgaard, 2008, pp. 217-219; pp. 225-226).<sup>102</sup>

The agent is able to be active in choosing her action since she has "the capacity of self-determination", the power Kant terms "will" (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 99). That is, although the agent's incentives provide "potential grounds" for guiding her actions, she has the power to choose whether to take the corresponding actions, thereby taking control of her actions. In doing so, she, as explained earlier, sets her maxim of actions and makes it the law governing her actions. Kant calls this capacity of the will "autonomy", the power to legislate law to itself (Korsgaard, 2008, pp. 3-5; Hill, 2012, p. 124).

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<sup>101</sup> On this picture, the agent's movements count as actions just in case her will, as the power of self-determination, chooses the way in which she acts. By contrast, the agent's movements that are not her choice of will, but done unconsciously or involuntarily are not taken as her actions. Instead, those movements are viewed as things that just occur to her (Korsgaard, 2009, pp. 18-19).

<sup>102</sup> The idea that the agent chooses (or intends or wills) the action that she takes to be good does not, as far as I can see, undermine the possibility of akrasia. Akrasia arises when the agent, say, intends to act against her better all-things-considered judgement. In such a case, the agent might judge that B is, for instance, financially good; however, A is better than B, all things considered. When the agent acts akratically and intends to do B, it does not mean that the agent intends to perform the action (B) that she does not take to be good. She believes B is financially good. This means when the agent intends to do B, she acts in a way that she takes to be good after all. It then appears that the Kantian idea under consideration is compatible with the possibility of akrasia.

Moreover, the agent as a rational nature possessing the “will” not only is capable of determining her actions but also has the capacity of rational choice. That is, she is capable of actively making her choice of actions in accordance with the principle of practical reason. This principle is, on the Kantian theory, Kant’s categorical imperative commanding “you must will your maxim as a universal law” (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 58).<sup>103</sup> On this picture, the categorical imperative is taken to be “the law of rational will”; that is, the law that rational will legislates for itself (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 154). Further, complying with the categorical imperative is the only way of making the agent’s actions permissible or objectively good (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 83).

In the next section, I explain my understanding of why the agent’s actions would not, on the Kantian view, be objectively good unless they conform to the categorical imperative, making reference to Korsgaard’s work.

## **Section 2. The Categorical Imperative as the Condition of the Objective Goodness of Action**

To understand why the agent’s actions must, on the Kantian theory, comply with the categorical imperative in order to be objectively good, it is worth noting that things including actions are, according to Korsgaard, objectively good either if they are unconditionally good or if they are conditionally good and the condition(s) of their goodness is (are) met (Korsgaard, 1996d, p. 258).

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<sup>103</sup> It is worth noting that Korsgaard takes Kant’s hypothetical and categorical imperatives as the principles of practical reason. The hypothetical imperative instructs “if you will an end, you must will the means to that end” (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 68). This implies that the hypothetical imperative governs the relation between acts and ends. However, the object of the agent’s choice is, as mentioned previously, action, but not mere act. Thus, the hypothetical imperative does not apply to the choice of action (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 68; p. 82).

In clarification, Kant draws a distinction between unconditionally and conditionally good things. The unconditional good has its goodness in itself. Its goodness does not derive from other things. Rather, it is “the source and condition of all the goodness in the world” (Korsgaard, 1996d, p. 259). The only unconditional good is, on the Kantian theory, the good will or humanity. All other things are conditionally good. They are good only if they meet the condition of their goodness which is humanity or good will (Korsgaard, 1996d, pp. 250-251; p. 259).

What Kant has in mind by “humanity” refers to “rational nature”; and “rational nature, in its perfect state, is a good will” (Korsgaard, 1996a, p. 17). What, for Kant, makes a will good is that its choice is determined by the categorical imperative. In this case, the conformity of the good will’s choice of actions to the categorical imperative is not by chance. Rather, the good will chooses actions out of respect for the categorical imperative (Johnson and Cureton, 2017, Sec. 2). Of course, it does not mean that if a will’s choice of actions is not actually determined by the categorical imperative, it won’t be an unconditional end. Rather, the capacity for good will or the possession of rational nature is, according to Korsgaard, sufficient to be taken as an unconditional end (Korsgaard, 1996b, p. 124).

Putting this together, we have considered that an action deemed good is, on Korsgaard’s view, objectively good only if the condition of the goodness of the action, as a conditional good, is met; and the condition of its goodness is good will or humanity, which is the only unconditionally good thing. If that is the case, the question is how this action would satisfy the condition of its goodness.

In my view, this question can be answered in the following way. It has been mentioned that all conditionally good things derive their goodness from the unconditional good. This implies that an action is objectively good just in case it issues from humanity. To see how it is possible for actions to meet this condition, we have considered that “humanity” is, on the Kantian theory, understood as “rational nature”. Further, the distinctive feature of rational nature is to have the capacity of making a choice of actions in accordance with the principle of practical reason taken to be Kant’s categorical imperative; where the choice of actions involves adopting a “maxim”. On this picture, if the adopted maxim conforms to the categorical imperative, it would be the rational will’s own choice. That is because the law of rational will is, for Kantians, the categorical imperative. This implies that the agent’s action would be objectively good only if it complies with the categorical imperative. That is because only in this case, would it be the product of rational nature (or humanity).<sup>104</sup>

The next section spells out how to determine whether a given maxim conforms to the categorical imperative.

### **Section 3. How to Apply the Categorical Imperative**

Kant offers four different formulas of the categorical imperative while insisting that they are not specifying different laws; rather, they are various statements of the very same law. Those formulations are termed *the Formula of the*

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<sup>104</sup> To avoid a misunderstanding, it is worth highlighting that complying with the categorical imperative is sufficient to make actions objectively good, no matter whether the agent subjects her maxim to the categorical imperative before acting. The agent’s checking whether the agent’s maxim complies with the categorical imperative is a further requirement for the agent’s action to be praiseworthy.

*Universal Law of Nature*<sup>105</sup>, *the Formula of Humanity*<sup>106</sup>, *the Autonomy Formula*<sup>107</sup> and *the Kingdom of Ends Formula*<sup>108</sup>.

There is controversy about what exactly the claim that “all four formulations are equivalent” implies. According to the standard and widely accepted interpretation of Kant’s theory, it can be understood that applying each formulation would yield the same result (Johnson and Cureton, 2017, Sec. 9). If so, since space does not allow me to discuss all four formulas, I focus on just two of them, that is, *the Formula of the Universal Law of Nature* and *the Formula of Humanity*. I refer to these two formulations because they do substantial work when Kantians come to expounding permissible and impermissible actions.

### **I. The Formula of the Universal Law of Nature**

The first formulation of the categorical imperative is the so-called *Formula of the Universal Law of Nature*. It commands an agent to “act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (Kant, 1998, 4:421).

Given this formulation, an action is, on the Kantian theory, objectively good (or permissible, in Kant’s terminology) only if its maxim can be willed to be a universal law. It is worth noting that whether or not the maxim can be willed as

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<sup>105</sup> This dictates “act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (Kant, 1998, 4:421).

<sup>106</sup> This commands agents to “act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means” (Kant, 1998, 4:429).

<sup>107</sup> This concerns “the idea of the will of every rational being as a universally legislative will” (Kant, 1998, 4:432). To express it in the imperative form, “act so that through your maxims you could be a legislator of universal laws” (Johnson and Cureton, 2017, Sec. 7).

<sup>108</sup> This orders agents to “act in accordance with the maxims of a member giving universal laws for a merely possible kingdom of ends” (Kant, 1998, 4:439).

a universal law is not a question of whether the agent would like it to be a universal law. Rather, it is a question of whether it can be willed as a universal law without amounting to contradiction (Korsgaard, 1996c, p. 77).

What Kant has in mind by “contradiction” refers to two kinds of contradiction: a *contradiction in conception* and a *contradiction in the will*. The universalization of an immoral maxim gives rise to a contradiction in conception if there is an “internal impossibility” of taking the maxim to be a universal law. That is, the maxim “cannot even be thought as a universal law”. However, if it appears that the will contradicts itself when the maxim is willed to be universal, it will be a contradiction in the will (Korsgaard, 1996c, pp. 77-79). To determine whether a given maxim could be a universal law, we need to know in which sense there might be a contradiction in a universalised maxim.

#### **i. Understanding the contradiction in a universalised immoral maxim**

According to Korsgaard, there are three different readings of the contradiction involved in the universalised immoral maxims: the *Logical Contradiction Interpretation*, the *Teleological Contradiction Interpretation* and the *Practical Contradiction Interpretation* (1996c, p. 78).

Although Kant’s language provides us with some textual supporting evidence for all three readings, Korsgaard defends the Practical Contradiction Interpretation in her work “Formula of Universal Law” (1996c).<sup>109</sup> It is beyond the scope of the present work to enter the controversy about how best to understand the contradiction to which a universalised immoral maxim

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<sup>109</sup> For the details of Korsgaard’s argument against the Logical Contradiction and the Teleological Contradiction interpretations, see Korsgaard (1996c, pp. 77-105). Further, for some argument against the Practical Contradiction Interpretation, see Rivera-Castro (2014).

amounts. Nor does space allow me to spell out the contradiction in conception and the contradiction in the will in terms of all three readings. Since my primary focus has been on Korsgaard's view on the Kantian theory, I leave aside the Logical Contradiction Interpretation and the Teleological Contradiction Interpretation, and concern myself with the Practical Contradiction Interpretation.<sup>110</sup> I try to shed light on how the Practical Contradiction Interpretation, according to Korsgaard, understands the contradiction in conception and the contradiction in the will.

### **Contradiction in conception**

On the Practical Contradiction Interpretation, a contradiction in conception arises when the universalization of a given maxim makes it the case that the corresponding act would no longer be effective. It is not effective in the sense that it cannot work to achieve the end for the sake of which it is done in the world of the universalised maxim. Consider the maxim of "making a false promise in order to gain some money". When this maxim is universalised, the act of promising loses its efficacy in fulfilling the end entailed in the maxim. That is because false promises can be effective in getting some money only if people trust them; and they would accept promises just in case not all people exercise them in a deviant way. However, the universalization of this maxim makes it the case that no one believes promises any longer. Then, promises fail to fulfil the agent's end for the sake of which the agent makes a promise (Korsgaard, 1996c, pp. 92-93).

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<sup>110</sup> For some explanation for the Logical Contradiction and Teleological Contradiction interpretations, see Korsgaard (1996c, pp. 78-92).

## **Contradiction in the will**

The universalization of a given maxim, on the Practical Contradiction Interpretation, amounts to a contradiction in the will when the purpose(s) essential to the will is (are) frustrated in the world of the universalised maxim. According to Korsgaard, the purposes essential to the will are, *inter alia*, its freedom to set some ends and its effectiveness in following them (Korsgaard, 1996c, pp. 96-97).

To make this clear, take the following examples. The cases of refusing to develop our talents and to help other people result in thwarting the will's freedom and effectiveness which are, in Korsgaard's view, its essential purposes. That is because self-perfection is a matter of developing our capacities as rational natures, the capacities making us able to make rational choices; where this means to freely adopt and pursue some ends under the direction of reason, independent of inclinations. However, the rational will's freedom would be thwarted without self-perfection as one of its essential purposes (1996b, p. 127).<sup>111</sup>

Further, the pursuit of some of our ends requires to some extent cooperation. However, it would be difficult to see how cooperation might be possible in the world where people universally refuse to help each other. In such a world, the

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<sup>111</sup> While my primary aim is not to argue against the Practical Contradiction Interpretation, there is, as far as I can see, a possible objection to Korsgaard's above explanation of the contradiction involved in the action of refusing to develop our talents. The objection is that there is no actual exercise of universalising the maxim of the action under consideration. That is, if I abstain from developing my capacities and talents, it would yield the frustration of my will's freedom, no matter whether or not the maxim of the action under consideration is universalised. Korsgaard herself raises a similar objection to the Teleological interpretation of the contradiction in conception. For its detail, see Korsgaard (1996c, p. 87).

will would no more be effective in following and achieving its ends (Korsgaard, 1996c, pp. 96-97; p. 127).

It then follows that the actions of refusing self-perfection and refusing to help others cannot be willed to be universal laws. That is because in each case, the universalization of the maxim amounts to the contradiction in the will since the purposes of freedom and effectiveness, which are essential to the will, are frustrated in the world of those universalised maxims.

Having explained the Practical Contradiction Interpretation for which Korsgaard, as a prominent Kantian, opts, I next sketch how the Formula of the Universal Law of Nature serves to determine whether an action is in conformity with the categorical imperative.

## **ii. The procedure for applying the Formula of the Universal Law of Nature**

To determine whether a given action complies with the categorical imperative by referring to the Formula of the Universal Law of Nature, the following process must be followed.

- 1) The first step is to specify the maxim of action.

This in turn raises the question of how to formulate the agent's maxim of action. In response, it is worth noting that a maxim is, for Kant, the subjective principle on which the agent undertakes an action (Kant, 1998, 4:421). This implies that the maxim of action must describe the action as it has been seen by the agent. That is, it must include as much of the material concerning the features of the agent and her circumstances as is required to make sense of the

goodness of this action, from the agent's perspective. That is because when the agent chooses (or intends or wills) an action, she, as explained earlier, chooses the action due to viewing it to be good.

This implies that the maxim of action minimally contains a specific way of acting to which the agent has been disposed and the agent's adopted end, the end supposed to be achieved by acting in that way (Herman, 1993, p. 75; Korsgaard, 2008, pp. 217-219; O'Neill, 1989, p. 84). If that is the case, the basic formulation of the maxim of action can, according to Korsgaard, be like this: "I will do act-A in order to promote end-E" (Korsgaard, 2008, p. 219). For the present purpose, take the following simple maxim: "I do A in order to promote E".

2) Having formulated the maxim of action, the next step is to universalise the maxim. This means to express this maxim such that it would be a universal principle applying to everyone, and not just a specific person. The universalization of the maxim under consideration would be: "Everyone does A in order to promote E".

3) The third step is to examine whether the universalised maxim can be a universal law. That is, whether it is possible for everyone to act on this maxim in the world of the universalised maxim without any contradiction.

If it is impossible to imagine such a world, this means the universalised maxim would amount to the *contradiction in conception*. In this case, the action is, on the Kantian view, impermissible; and the agent has a perfect

duty<sup>112</sup> not to do this action. That is, she ought to refrain from performing this action in all circumstances. However, if the maxim can pass this stage, that is, if there could be a world governed by the universalised maxim, a further step is required to be undertaken.

4) In the final stage, we consider whether everyone could rationally will the universalised maxim to be the law of the world where she/he lives. If it could not be rationally willed by everyone, this means the universalization of the maxim gives rise to a *contradiction in the will*. In this case, the action is impermissible, and the agent ought not to do it. By contrast, if the maxim passes this final stage, this implies that the action is permissible (or objectively good); and the agent has an imperfect duty to do this action. That is, the agent is required to pursue this action over time. However, she is given latitude to choose when and how much to do it. For instance, the acts of “developing our talents” and “helping others” are, on the Kantian theory, classified as imperfect duties (Johnson and Cureton, 2017, Sec. 5; Korsgaard, 1996a, pp. 20-21; Stratton-Lake, 2000, p. 8; p. 19).

Having explained how to apply the Formula of the Universal Law of Nature to a maxim in order to determine whether this maxim is in conformity with the categorical imperative, I shall spell out how the Formula of Humanity is supposed to work in assessing the conformity of maxims to the categorical imperative.

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<sup>112</sup> Perfect duties are strict; they do not allow any exceptions. Rather, they require the agent to perform or abstain from some specific actions on all occasions. For example, the agent has a perfect duty to abstain from “making false promises” (Johnson and Cureton, 2017, Sec. 5; Korsgaard, 1996a, pp. 20-21; Stratton-Lake, 2000, p. 8; p. 19).

## **II. The Formula of Humanity**

The Formula of Humanity dictates: “so act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means” (Kant, 1998, 4:429). This implies that humanity or rational nature is, on the Kantian theory, taken to be an end in itself. It is an “unconditionally valuable end” contrary to which we ought never to act (Korsgaard, 1996b, p. 123). Thus, if the agent acts such that she uses humanity as a mere means to her aim, she would violate the Formula of Humanity.

Of course, this does not mean that other things are not good or valuable. Rather, they are conditionally good. Their goodness comes from the unconditionally good or valuable end, which is humanity (Korsgaard, 1996b, pp. 117-118). “It is the condition of the goodness of all our other ends”. “No relative end can be pursued as if it were better or more important than humanity itself without a kind of contradiction” (Korsgaard, 1996b, p. 125).

To apply the Formula of Humanity to cases like making a false promise and committing suicide, they are cases in which the agent treats humanity, in the person of others or in her own person, merely as a means, thereby violating the Formula of Humanity. Thus, they are immoral actions which the agent ought not to take (Korsgaard, 1996b, p. 125).

To explain the failure of false promises to comply with the Formula of Humanity, we can say that when the agent makes a false promise, she treats others merely as a means to achieve her own purpose. The agent’s false promise is effective since not all people exercise promises in the way that she uses. In such a world, people trust promises; and it is people’s honesty that

makes the agent's promise effective. Hence, the agent considers others merely as a means to her end (Korsgaard, 1996b, pp. 126-127).

Now consider why the case of suicide is not in conformity with the Formula of Humanity. In committing suicide, the agent uses a rational nature merely as a means to achieve her end which might be to escape from misery. Although the agent's end might be good because she releases herself from a difficult situation, her end is, on the Kantian view, conditionally good; its goodness comes from the unconditionally good end. However, in the case of suicide, the source of the goodness of the agent's end is destroyed. The agent sacrifices a rational nature, which is an unconditionally valuable end, for a conditional good end, namely, releasing herself from misery. Then, she uses humanity in her own person merely as a means to achieve her relative end (Korsgaard, 1996b, pp. 125-126).<sup>113</sup>

It is worth highlighting that the Formula of Humanity does not command refraining from using someone as a means to an end; for example, asking someone for directions. Instead, it instructs not to treat anyone as a *mere* means. It then appears that the distinction between "treating one as a means" and "treating one *merely* as a means" is crucial. This in turn raises the question of how to understand what the contrast is supposed to be between treating one "as a means" and "*merely* as a means".

As discussed by Parfit (2011), Kant holds that we won't treat someone merely as a means if we treat her/him in a way to which (s)he could rationally

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<sup>113</sup> Some might find Korsgaard's explanation of the wrongness (or impermissibility) of committing suicide under the Formula of Humanity unconvincing. However, it is beyond the scope of this work to argue for or against her view. Instead, my aim is to show how Korsgaard as a prominent Kantian applies the Formula of Humanity to the case of committing suicide.

consent. However, if we make use of someone in a deceitful or coercive way, we will treat her/him as a mere means (Parfit, 2011, p. 218; p. 224).<sup>114</sup>

To take an example, if I hire a private detective to do some work for me, I would use his rational capacities (as humanity in him) to pursue my aim. That is, I use him as a means to my end. If I do so in a way to which he has rationally consented, for instance, by being paid an agreed amount of money, I would not use him merely as a means. By contrast, if I use his talents and capacities through the exercise of coercion or deception, I would use him as a mere means to my end. It is only in this case that I would act contrary to the Formula of Humanity, but not in the first case where I pay the agreed amount for the detective's work.

Having considered how to apply the Formula of the Universal Law of Nature and the Formula of Humanity to a maxim in order to realise whether the corresponding action is permissible (or objectively good), I need to address one issue before moving on to the next section.

### **III. The Link to Sufficiently Weighty Normative Reasons**

The primary aim of this chapter has been to consider the implication(s) of the proposed account of weakness of will conjoined with the Kantian theory of reasons for action. To this end, my concern has been to understand what it is, for Kantians, to have a sufficiently weighty reason for doing an action. However, much of the discussion of the Kantian theory has been about permissibility and impermissibility of action, but not reasons for action. As a result, to achieve the purpose of this chapter, I need to make a transition from

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<sup>114</sup> For more detail, see Parfit (2011; pp. 212-232).

the Kantian claims about the (im)permissibility of action to the claims about sufficiently weighty normative reasons.

To make a connection between these two claims, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that the categorical imperative is, for Kantians, the unconditional principle with which the agent's maxim of action ought always to comply; otherwise, the corresponding action is impermissible. This implies that the agent ought not to perform an action the maxim of which violates the categorical imperative. If that is the case, I take it that when the agent's maxim of action fails to comply with the categorical imperative, she does not have a sufficiently weighty normative reason to do the action in question. However, if the maxim on which she acts turns out to be in conformity with the categorical imperative, I take it that there is a sufficiently weighty normative reason for her to act as she does. Having made such a connection between the Kantian view of "(im)permissibility of action" and "normative reason", we are now in a position to combine the proposed account of weakness of will with the Kantian view and examine the implication(s) of the conjoint view. This is the topic of the next section.

#### **Section 4. The Implication(s) of the Conjoint View**

The main concern of this section is to consider the implication(s) of the conjoint view, namely, my proposed account of weakness of will combined with the Kantian theory of reasons for action. I have suggested that weakness of will arises when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. By "without a good enough normative reason", I mean the agent acts as she does out of a

motivation that does not correspond with a sufficiently weighty normative reason. When this view is combined with Kantianism, the agent does not exhibit weakness of will in withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) her practical commitment(s) if her maxim of action complies with the categorical imperative.

To clarify why the conjoint view yields this outcome, it has been discussed that whether an action is permissible (or objectively good) is, on the Kantian theory, a matter of conformity to the categorical imperative. More specifically, if the agent's maxim conforms to the categorical imperative, the corresponding action would be permissible (or objectively good). Otherwise, the action would be impermissible; and the agent ought not to do it.

Then, to move from the Kantian thoughts about the "(im)permissibility of action" to "sufficiently weighty normative reason", I have made an assumption. Given that the categorical imperative is the unconditional principle contrary to which the agent ought never to act, I have taken it that when the agent's maxim fails to comply with the categorical imperative, the agent acts as she does without a sufficiently weighty normative reason, on the Kantian view. This implies that the agent would, on the conjoint view, show weakness of will in withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) her practical commitment(s) if her maxim violates the categorical imperative.

This in turn provokes at least two challenges to the conjoint view. First, it might be claimed that too many cases, on the conjoint picture, turn out to be cases of weakness of will. That is because the conjoint view implies that any time that the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical

commitment(s), she would manifest weakness of will unless she takes the action whose maxim is in conformity with the categorical imperative. The second challenge concerns inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will. More precisely, the conjoint view apparently implies that there is no case of inverse akrasia that is also a case of weakness of will.<sup>115</sup> Inverse akrasia is a case where the agent acts contrary to her all-things-considered judgement although in doing so, she does what is right to do. This case is widely accepted as a case of weakness of will, in the traditional sense (Arpaly and Schroeder, 1999, pp. 161-162; Kleist, 2009, p. 257). However, the conjoint view does not apparently count it as weakness of will. That is because in the alleged inverse akrasia, the agent takes the right course of action, that is, the action for which there is a sufficiently weighty normative reason.<sup>116</sup> Hence, she does not show weakness of will despite acting against her practical commitment.

It is important to deal with these two problems because my opponents may take them as evidence for the implausibility of the proposed account of weakness of will. That is, they may claim that since the conjoint view appears to have these embarrassing and uncomfortable implications, there is a flaw in the proposed account. In the rest of this section, I spell out and tackle these two objections in turn.

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<sup>115</sup> In chapter 4, I have argued that my proposed account of weakness of will in itself allows the possibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will. Here, the discussion of inverse akrasia concerns the conjoint view.

<sup>116</sup> Any view according to which there must be a sufficiently weighty normative reason to do an action in order that this action can be right leads us to this implication; the implication that in cases of inverse akrasia, there is a sufficiently weighty normative reason for the action that the agent does.

## **I. Too Many Cases Objection**

On the Kantian theory, the agent's action is, as mentioned earlier, objectively good (or permissible) only if she acts on a maxim conforming to the categorical imperative. Having combined this view with the proposed account of weakness of will, it seems that too many cases appear to be cases of weakness of will. That is because whether the agent, on the conjoint view, shows weakness of will in withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) her practical commitment(s) depends on whether her maxim conforms to the categorical imperative. On this picture, any time that the agent (say) withdraws her practical commitment(s), she would exhibit weakness of will unless she takes the action whose maxim complies with the categorical imperative.

To take an example, suppose the agent intends to never commit suicide. While maintaining this intention, she is later involved in a horrific accident making her disabled for life. This incident causes her to change her mind. That is, she abandons her original intention and proceeds to commit suicide. She does so in order to get free from unendurable suffering. That means that her end or reason for committing suicide is to release herself from misery.

In this case, it seems intuitively that the agent's reason for which she acts as she does is apparently good enough to justify her action. If so, this implies that the agent does not manifest weakness of will in abandoning her executive commitment made by her intention to abstain from committing suicide. However, that is not the case, from the conjoint view. Rather, the agent, on this picture, exhibits weakness of will. That is because she does not, according to

Korsgaard, perform the permissible action since, as explained by Korsgaard (1996b, pp. 125-126)<sup>117</sup>, the maxim of this action fails to comply with the categorical imperative.

To clarify why this is so, take the Formula of Humanity according to which the agent ought to treat humanity always as an unconditional end contrary to which she ought never to act (Korsgaard, 1996b, p. 123). In the case of suicide, the agent, as explained earlier, uses her own rational nature merely as a means to achieve her end which is to escape from a difficult situation. Although this end might be good, it is a conditionally good one whose goodness comes from the unconditional good, namely, humanity (or rational nature). In committing suicide, the agent sacrifices a rational nature for a conditional good. This means she uses humanity in her own person as a mere means to promote a relative end (Korsgaard, 1996b, pp. 125-126). Thus, the agent's action is not, for Korsgaard, permissible. Hence she manifests weakness of will in abandoning her practical commitment, from the conjoint perspective.

If that is the case, objectors may claim that this is a sort of over-generation of cases of weakness of will since any time that the agent's maxim of action, on the Kantian theory, fails to comply with the categorical imperative, she would show weakness of will if she withdraws her practical commitment in acting as she does. Then, rivals for the proposed account of weakness of will may take this implication as evidence for the inadequacy of the proposed account. That is, they may claim that since the conjoint view yields the over-

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<sup>117</sup> In section 3 (sub-section II), I have offered Korsgaard's explanation of the wrongness (or impermissibility) of committing suicide under the Formula of Humanity.

generation of cases of weakness of will, the proposed account of weakness of will is not plausible. This is what I call the Too Many Cases objection.

### **i. Answering the Too Many Cases objection**

As far as I can see, there are at least three ways to react to this objection.

1) One possible response is to accept this implication of the conjoint view, the implication that weakness of will is a far more common phenomenon than it is often taken to be. Nevertheless, we may regard it as an interesting implication, but not problematic at all. It is not so implausible to take it that if the agent does an impermissible action against her practical commitment(s), she would display weakness of will. At least that makes sense to a Kantian who adopts the proposed account of weakness of will, given that the categorical imperative is, for Kantians, the unconditional principle to which the agent's maxim of action ought always to conform.

2) The second possible reaction is to admit that the conjoint view amounts to over-generation of cases of weakness of will; and to take it to be an embarrassing implication for the conjoint view. However, it is not obvious at all why we should count this implication as evidence against the proposed account of weakness of will. This implication is not by itself sufficient to provide grounds for concluding that the proposed account of weakness of will is implausible. Rather, it could put the Kantian theory in a vulnerable position.

Some may claim that the implication that too many cases, on the conjoint view, appear to be cases of weakness of will arises owing to the Kantian criterion of permissibility of action. According to Kantianism, an action is permissible just in case its maxim conforms to the categorical imperative.

Then, it is this criterion leading us to attribute weakness of will to the agent any time that her action of (say) withdrawal of practical commitment(s) fails to comply with the categorical imperative, given the conjoint view. Thus, if the implication under consideration is embarrassing and problematic, it is a problem for Kantians, but not for the proposed account of weakness of will. Further, there may be some who think, on any ground at all, that Kantianism is wrong. If so, they may then take the implication at issue as evidence to support the claim that the Kantian theory is implausible (or wrong). In any case, I take it that this implication can be used against Kantianism.

It is worth emphasising that my aim is not here to argue against the Kantian theory. Rather, the point is that the implication under consideration is not by itself sufficient to prove the inadequacy of the proposed account of weakness of will. Instead, it might be taken as evidence against the Kantian theory.

3) As the third response, the claim that too many cases, on the conjoint view, appear to be cases of weakness of will may not, as far as I can see, be quite right. Rather cases of weakness of will may, on the conjoint picture, be fewer than objectors have supposed. To illustrate this possibility, consider the following example.

Assume the agent intends to go on to higher education since she views it as a way of self-improvement. In the intervening time, she is offered a well-paid full-time job. Then, she drops (or abandons) her prior intention and accepts this offer. She proceeds to do this job in order to earn a fortune while believing that she cannot earn that much if she enters higher education. In this case, one may claim that the agent does not, on the Kantian picture, seem to act rightly. That

is because the agent has a duty to self-improvement. Nonetheless, she abandons her intention, though acting on it would result in (or at least stand a chance of) developing her talents and abilities. She does so and takes the job just because it is well paid. If so, it may be claimed that this reason does not, on the Kantian theory, seem to be as weighty as the reason for which she intends to go on to higher education (namely, self-improvement). Thus, the agent apparently displays weakness of will, within the conjoint framework.

However, this understanding of this case is not, in my view, quite right. That is, this case may not necessarily be a case of weakness of will, from the conjoint perspective. To see why, it is worth highlighting that self-improvement is, on the Kantian theory, an imperfect duty. That is, the agent is required to promote it in her life. Further, this kind of duty does not specify what, when and how much the agent must do in order to fulfil her corresponding duty. Rather, the agent is given latitude to make decisions about what, when, and how much to do (Johnson and Cureton, 2017, Sec. 5; Korsgaard, 1996a, pp. 20-21; Stratton-Lake, 2000, p. 8; p. 19).

If that is right, it does not then necessarily follow that the agent fails to act rightly in doing what she does. That is because taking the job may result in developing her abilities and talents, in some other respect(s). Even if this specific job does not lead to the agent's self-improvement, she won't violate her imperfect duty to develop her talents as she is given latitude in fulfilling this duty. That is, she may at some point in her life do other activities promoting this duty. Thus, it does not necessarily follow that the agent, on the Kantian picture, acts wrongly. If that is right, this implies that the agent does not necessarily exhibit weakness of will when she drops her prior intention to

go on to higher education. Thus, it may not be the case that many cases, on the conjoint picture, turn out to be cases of weakness of will. Given the agent's latitude in fulfilling her imperfect duties, this feature of the Kantian theory may even yield the result that cases of weakness of will are less frequent than they seems intuitively to be.

Considering this implication of the conjoint view raises the following methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to regard the results of this implication as a consideration in favour of or against the Kantian theory of reasons. If there are some advocates of my account of weakness of will who give a positive answer to this methodological question, the results of considering this implication will suggest the following to them. If this implication is deemed interesting, it may be taken as a consideration in favour of Kantianism. If it is regarded as problematic, it may, on the surface, count as evidence against the Kantian theory of reasons. However, this alleged implication is not by itself sufficient to prove the wrongness (or implausibility) of Kantianism. That is because it is not, as already explained, the case that too many cases are cases of weakness of will, within the conjoint framework.

Having dealt with the first objection, I shall turn to the second one.

## **II. A Challenge from Inverse Akrasia**

As mentioned before, the conjoint view implies that the agent won't manifest weakness of will in withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) her practical commitment(s) if her maxim conforms to the categorical imperative. This implication seems to be in contrast with the standard view on inverse akrasia. Inverse akrasia is characterised as a case in which the agent acts

against her practical judgement; however, in doing so, she takes the right course of action (Arpaly and Schroeder, 1999, pp. 161-162; Kleist, 2009, p. 257). That is, she does what there is a good enough normative reason for her to do. Nevertheless, since the agent acts contrary to her practical all-things-considered judgement, this case is standardly taken as a case of weakness of will, in the traditional sense.

However, the implication of the conjoint view for inverse akrasia is apparently that it is not a case of weakness of will since the agent does the right action, the action complying with the categorical imperative. To illustrate this apparent implication, consider the example of Huckleberry Finn. This is a well-known case in which Huck acts against his practical judgement that he ought to return Jim, who is a runaway slave, to his owner. In this case, Huck's action of abstaining from turning Jim in is, it may be claimed, in conformity with Kant's Formula of Humanity. That is because in acting as he does, Huck treats humanity in Jim with respect. Thus, he takes the right course of action. If so, this means Huck does not, on the conjoint view, show weakness of will in acting against his reasoning commitment.

Thus, one who takes inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will may raise an objection to the conjoint view. (S)he may claim that since the conjoint view implies the impossibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will, it must be wrong. That is the possible challenge based on inverse akrasia.

#### **i. Responding to the challenge from inverse akrasia**

To this objection, there are at least two lines of response. First this implication is not sufficient to prove the implausibility of the proposed account of

weakness of will. Rather, it may count as evidence against Kantianism. That is because in chapter 4, I have argued that cases of inverse akrasia that are also cases of weakness of will are, on my proposed account, possible. If conjoining the proposed account and Kantianism implies the impossibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will, the guilt for this implication lies in the implausibility of Kantianism.

The second reaction to the challenge under consideration is the following. On the surface, it seems as if the conjoint view implies the impossibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will. However, it is not necessarily the case that Huck does not, on the conjoint picture, manifest weakness of will while acting rightly, in the Kantian sense. To shed light on this line of defence, it is worth highlighting two issues.

First, the term “action” is, on the Kantian theory, used in a specific way. It, as explained in section 1, refers to an act together with the end for the sake of which this act is done. Second, whether the agent’s action is permissible (or objectively good) rests on whether its maxim conforms to the categorical imperative. Given these two points, it then follows that to determine whether Huck’s action is, on the Kantian picture, permissible (or objectively good), we have to take his act and the reason (or end, if you like) for which he does that act together, and subject his maxim of action to the categorical imperative. Doing so will be my main concern in the rest of the current section.

To examine whether Huck’s maxim of action is in conformity with the categorical imperative, we need to know what Huck’s possible acts and reasons for which he acts as he does, are. To provide a framework for our later

discussion, which is to subject Huck's maxim of action(s) to the categorical imperative, I first give some views on the Huck case in order to get a clearer picture of what action(s) may be attributed to him.

### **Some existing views on the Huck case**

Huckleberry Finn is growing up in a racist society where black people are taken as slaves who are owned. He becomes friends with Jim who is a runaway slave. On the basis of what Huck has been taught, he believes he ought to return Jim to his owner. However, he eventually fails to do so despite having some opportunities to turn Jim in.

In acting as Huck does, Bennett (1974, pp. 123-127) and many other philosophers<sup>118</sup> hold that Huck displays weakness of will, where weakness of will is identified with *akrasia*. It is a case of *akrasia* (or weakness of will) since Huck, as Bennett sees it, fails to resist his emotions, such as compassion, sympathy and empathy.<sup>119</sup> Hence, he succumbs to these feelings that are not in line with his practical judgement, thereby acting against this judgement.

Of course, there are some philosophers who do not endorse such a common interpretation of the Huck case. For example, Alan Goldman (2010, pp. 4-5) holds that although Huck is motivated by his sympathy for Jim, he in fact acts on his implicit judgement that he ought to help Jim. By his emotion of sympathy, Huck is implicitly aware of the fact that Jim is in a situation in which he needs help. This implicit awareness of the reason there is for him,

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<sup>118</sup> For example, see Arpaly (2003), Arpaly and Schroeder (1999) and Driver (2001).

<sup>119</sup> Chad Kleist (2009) argues that Huck is actually empathising with Jim, but not sympathising. Nonetheless, for the purposes of the present work, it does not matter whether Huck acts as he does from empathy or sympathy. Nor does it make any difference whether he is motivated by compassion for Jim or other emotion(s). I classify all of those feelings as emotional ones.

that is, Jim's need for help, leads Huck to implicitly reach the judgement that he ought to help Jim. Then, Huck acts on this judgement.

On a similar line of discussion, Carol Freedman (1997; pp. 107-108) believes that Huck's compassion and love for Jim cause Huck to see Jim as a human, but not as property.<sup>120</sup> This in turn brings Huck to the judgement that Jim ought not to be treated as a slave. Instead, he as a human ought to be free. As a result of this judgement, Huck does not turn Jim in; rather, he helps Jim escape from slavery.

It appears from the existing views on the Huck case that it is highly controversial why Huck abstains from turning Jim in. Some hold that he follows his emotions in refraining from returning Jim to his owner. That is, he is motivated to act as he does directly by his emotions without entertaining any thought about Jim's moral status. Some others believe Huck somehow comes to the view that Jim as a human must be free and treated with respect. Then, he acts on this implicit judgement. That is, his action is not just a reaction to his emotion; rather, the judgement under consideration plays an important role in motivating Huck to act as he does.

Nonetheless, what is less controversial is that Huck acts against his explicit judgement that he ought to turn Jim in. That is, even if it is granted that Huck at some points reaches an implicit judgement in favour of helping Jim to be free, Huck acts against his explicit practical all-things-considered judgement that he ought to turn Jim in. If that is right, this feature of the Huck case is enough to make it a case of weakness of will, as traditionally understood.

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<sup>120</sup> In Huck's society, black people are treated as slaves. This means they are taken to be properties that are owned.

Given the mentioned existing ideas about Huck, they suggest that Huck is subject to reasoning commitment, in my terminology: the commitment proceeding from his all-things-considered judgement in favour of returning Jim to his owner. Nonetheless, Huck acts against (or abandons) this judgement. Further, there are at least two reasons for which Huck can be deemed to act as he does, that is, compassion or sympathy for Jim, and seeing Jim as a human who needs help. With respect to these two reasons attributed to Huck in the literature, I shall examine the application of the conjoint view to Huck where he acts in a way that results in acting against (or abandoning) his reasoning commitment.

### **The application of the conjoint view to Huck**

To consider the application of the conjoint view to Huck's actions where he acts against his reasoning commitment, I need to subject his maxim of actions to the categorical imperative in order to know whether he, on the conjoint view, manifests weakness of will. That is because whether his reason for acting as he does is sufficiently weighty to justify his action, for Kantians, depends on whether his action complies with the categorical imperative, given the assumption made about the connection between "the (im)permissibility of an action" and a "sufficiently weighty normative reason".<sup>121</sup> If his maxim conforms to the categorical imperative, this will imply that the action is permissible or objectively good, from Kantians' perspective. In this case, it would not, on the conjoint view, be a case of weakness of will. However, if it fails to comply with the categorical imperative, this will mean that the action is impermissible. That is, he would then be doing the action without a sufficiently

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<sup>121</sup> I have made this assumption in section 3 (sub-section III).

weighty normative reason, thereby showing weakness of will in acting against his reasoning commitment.

### **Acting owing to seeing Jim as a human**

As previously mentioned, it might be claimed that the reason for which Huck acts as he does is his realisation of the fact that Jim is a human. If that is the case, Huck's maxim of action might be formulated as follows:

"I act against (or abandon) my judgement that I ought to turn Jim in, and help him to escape from slavery because he is a human; and he, as a human, must be treated with respect, but not as property".

In this case, Huck's action can, I believe, be justified, from Kantians' perspective. That is because this maxim is in conformity with the Formula of Humanity commanding us to treat humanity, whether in ourselves or in others, as an end, but not as a mere means (Kant, 1998, 4:429; Korsgaard, 1996b, p. 119; pp. 123-124).

An instance of treating one merely as a means is, as previously noted, a case where we use a person without her/his rational consent or in a deceitful or coercive way. To apply this to Jim who is a runaway slave, he as a slave is treated as the owner's property, a means serving the owner's ends. Further, when he is running away, this, in my view, implies that he has been used without his rational consent or through the use of deception or coercion. That is because if he has rationally consented to the way that he has been treated, or he has not served his owner under coercion, the question is why he is running away from his owner. The fact that Jim is running away, in my view, implies that he is not happy with the situation in which he lives. He is trying to escape

from slavery, thereby being free. If that is right, I take it that Jim has not consented to the way he has been used as a slave. This means he has been treated as a mere means.

When Huck acts contrary to his reasoning commitment (or practical judgement that he ought to turn Jim in), his reason for doing so is, as supposed here, the fact that Jim is a human, and not property; and he as a human must be free and treated with respect. Huck then acts as he does to help Jim to escape from slavery. In helping Jim as a human, Huck is in fact treating a rational nature as an end, and not as a mere means. Consequently, Huck takes the right (or objectively good) action since his maxim is in conformity with the categorical imperative. Then, Huck does not, on the conjoint view, display weakness of will in acting on this maxim.

### **Acting under the influence of emotions**

A further possible maxim on which Huck acts where he refrains from turning Jim in might be something like the following.

“I will (or intend) to take what my emotions lead me to do in order to satisfy them”.

As far as I can see, this maxim violates the Formula of Humanity. That is because in acting on this maxim, Huck uses his own rational nature as a mere means to satisfy his emotions. To clarify this, what Kant has in mind by “rational nature” refers to the capacity of rational choice, that is, to choose, say, what to do under the direction of reason. This distinctive feature of human beings is what makes them different from animals, for whom what they do is determined by instinct rather than practical reason. On this picture, “the

sensuous inclinations present themselves falsely as sufficient reasons for action” (Korsgaard, 1996b, pp. 109-111).

To apply this to Huck, when he acts as his emotions lead him, he fails to treat rational nature in his own person as an end; instead, he uses it merely as a means to serve his emotions. That is because what he does is determined by his emotions (or sensuous inclinations, if you like), but not by reason. Thus, he violates the Formula of Humanity in acting on the maxim under consideration. This means that Huck ought, on the Kantian theory, not to act on this maxim; and the corresponding action is impermissible. However, since he does the corresponding impermissible action while violating his practical commitment, he shows weakness of will, within the conjoint framework.

Nonetheless, Huck acts rightly which is to help a rational nature to be free, but not property. In this case, although Huck acts on his emotions (or out of sympathy for Jim), his emotions accidentally lead him to do what it is, on Kant’s picture, morally right. That is, he by chance does what he has a duty to do, which is to “help others”. Further, Huck’s act of “helping Jim” causes Jim as a human to be freed from slavery, thereby not being used as a mere means. This means Huck acts in a way that it is “in consistent with” the Formula of Humanity.<sup>122</sup>

To clarify this idea, it is worth calling attention to the distinction between “act” and “action” discussed in section 1. The notion of action entails an act and an end for the sake of which this act is done. Further, it has been explained that the agent chooses (wills or intends) an action expressed in the form of a

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<sup>122</sup> By “in consistent with” the Formula of Humanity, I mean by a stroke of luck, Huck acts as the Formula of Humanity requires.

maxim. On this picture, it is possible that the agent's maxim fails to comply with the categorical imperative, but the "act" entailed in her maxim is what the agent has a duty to do. In this case, although the "act" involved in this maxim is required by duty, the components of this maxim, namely, the act and the end for the sake of which the act is done, are related to each other in a way that the resulting maxim is not in conformity with the categorical imperative. However, this does not undermine the fact that the "act" involved in this maxim is required by duty. Thus, it is a morally right "act" to do.

To back up the idea that Huck acts rightly, I refer to Kant's example of a sympathetic agent who acts rightly, but from non-moral motives. In this case, the sympathetic agent helps another when she can from inclinations or interest such as sympathy. In doing so, the agent acts in a morally right way from non-moral motives. That is, she does what she has a duty to do; however, she acts as she does not because she is required by duty. Instead, she helps others out of a non-moral motivation. As a result, her action is not, for Kant, morally praise worthy since she does not act from the motive of duty. It is just a matter of accident or luck that her inclinations lead her to do what is morally right. Nevertheless, she acts rightly, after all (Herman, 1993, pp. 1-22).

Looking back on the Huck case, I have demonstrated that Huck's maxim of action, where he acts on his emotions (or out of sympathy for Jim), fails to comply with the categorical imperative. This failure implies that Huck acts as he does while his reason for which he acts is not sufficiently weighty, given the connection made earlier (in section 3) between the (im)permissibility of an action and a sufficiently weighty normative reason. Hence his action is, on the conjoint picture, a case of weakness of will. Nevertheless, by a stroke of

fortune his emotions promote what is morally right to do, that is, what he has a duty to do. Further, by helping Jim as a rational nature to be free, Huck acts in a way that it is “in consistent with” the Formula of Humanity. If that is right, this case, on the conjoint view, appears to be a case of inverse akrasia that is also a case of weakness of will. Then, it follows that it is not the case that the conjoint view amounts to the impossibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will.

Considering this implication raises the methodological question of whether it is legitimate to take this implication into account in deciding whether Kantianism is to be preferred to another theory of reasons. If some of the advocates of the proposed account hold the legitimacy of doing so, they may take it as a consideration in favour of the Kantian theory of reasons.

One might claim that what the results of considering this implication suggest to those advocates depends on whether they view inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will. If they hold that inverse akrasia is a case of weakness of will, they may treat these results as a consideration for the plausibility of Kantianism. However, if they refuse the genuine existence of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will, they may take it against Kantianism.

In response, it is worth drawing attention to the following point. In section 5 of chapter 4, I have demonstrated that there is, on my proposed picture of weakness of will, room for cases of inverse akrasia as cases of weakness of will. That is because weakness of will, on my view, occurs when the agent (say) acts against her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. By “without a good enough normative reason”, I mean that

what motivates the agent to act as she does is not a good enough normative reason. This implies that if one has been an advocate of the proposed account of weakness of will, (s)he would have already been happy about the genuine existence of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will. Otherwise, (s)he would not be a proponent of the proposed account. If that is right, this means those advocates who give a positive response to the methodological question have already counted inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will.

### **Section 5. Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed to elaborate my proposed account of weakness of will further by adding to it a Kantian theory of reasons, and to see what the resulting conjoint view implies. To this end, I have first elucidated how Kantians understand reasons for action, at least according to the account of one widely respected and influential Kantian, Korsgaard. Whether an action is, for Kantians, objectively good (or permissible) is a matter of conformity to the categorical imperative. Clarifying why this is the case has been the purpose of the second section. Then, the third section has explained how to determine whether an action complies with the categorical imperative by referring to the Formula of the Universal Law of Nature and the Formula of Humanity. Finally, I have considered the implications of the conjoint view, and addressed two challenges. First, it has been objected that too many cases, on the conjoint view, turn out to be cases of weakness of will. Second, it has been claimed that the conjoint view implies the impossibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will.

To deal with the first difficulty, termed the Too Many Cases objection, it has been proposed that this implication is not necessarily problematic; instead, we can take it to be an interesting implication. Second, if it is a problem, it is not sufficient to provide grounds for the inadequacy of my proposed account of weakness of will. Rather, it might be taken as evidence against the Kantian theory. Thirdly, I have illustrated that cases of weakness of will may not, on the conjoint view, be as frequent as objectors have originally supposed them to be, given the Kantian notion of “imperfect duty”.

To tackle the second challenge, based on inverse akrasia, I have examined the application of the conjoint view to Huck’s actions. It has then appeared that at least one of the maxims on which Huck might be taken to act has failed to comply with the categorical imperative, thereby being a case of weakness of will, as the conjoint view understands it. Nevertheless, Huck accidentally acts rightly in helping a rational nature; that is, he by chance acts as required by duty. Further, by a stroke of luck, he acts in a way that it is “in consistent with” the Formula of Humanity. Then, this case appears to be a case of inverse akrasia that is also weakness of will, within the conjoint framework. Thus, it has not been the case that the conjoint view yields the impossibility of inverse akrasia, as a case of weakness of will.

The findings of this chapter show that the two mentioned challenges fail to undermine the plausibility of my proposed account of weakness of will. That is because it is not the case that the conjoint view gives rise to those two apparent implications. Moreover, the results suggest that my general proposal of weakness of will, which refers to “sufficiently weighty normative reason” in understanding weakness of will, is at least minimally plausible when it is

conjoined with the Kantian theory of reasons. Or at least, we have not found any conclusive evidence to deny its plausibility.

Conjoining the proposed account with Kantianism has raised the following methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to take the results of considering the implications of this conjoint view into account in deciding whether Kantianism is plausible. To those advocates of my proposed account who give a positive answer to this methodological question, the results of this study suggest the following. As regards the Too Many Cases objection, if it is treated as interesting, these advocates may take it in favour of the Kantian theory of reasons. However, even if it is deemed problematic, this apparent implication fails to undermine the plausibility of Kantianism although it on the surface seems to do so. With respect to inverse akrasia, these advocates may count the fact that the conjoint view allows for the possibility of cases of inverse akrasia that are also cases of weakness of will as evidence to support Kantianism.

## **Chapter 8. Conclusion of the Thesis**

There are at least two main views of weakness of will in the philosophical literature. One is known as the traditional view—according to which weakness of will (identified with *akrasia*) is to intentionally and freely act against one's better (or all-things-considered) judgement. The other view, presented by Holton (2009), takes weakness of will to be, roughly, a matter of acting against one's prior intention too readily.

In my view, there are some cases of judgement-violation and also some cases of intention-violation in which the agent intuitively seems to show weakness of will in acting as she does. However, not all cases of judgement-violation and intention-violation intuitively seem to be cases of weakness of will. Further, it seems that there are cases where we are inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent although she does not violate her better (or all-things-considered) judgement or intention in acting as she does. If our intuition is on the right track, the question is whether there is any way of understanding weakness of will such that it can make sense of every case where we are inclined to attribute weakness of will to the agent.

As a result, this thesis began by seeking an account of weakness of will that can explain what it is in a range of cases that makes them cases of weakness of will. My proposal has been to understand weakness of will in terms of withdrawing (abandoning, revising or acting against) the agent's practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason.

This proposed view is not the outcome of combining the traditional view and Holton's account. That is because first, not all cases of *akrasia* (in its

narrow sense referring to judgement-violation) are, on this proposed view, cases of weakness of will. Second, this view accommodates some cases where the agent seems to display weakness of will in acting as she does although she violates neither her better judgement nor her intention. Then, this view is a unified account of weakness of will that we would not get just by putting together the traditional account and Holton's view.

Having suggested that a proper analysis of weakness of will entails, among other things, claims about good enough normative reasons, the completion of this project involves considering what happens when the proposed account of weakness of will is conjoined with some theories of reasons. A further motivation for an investigation into the implications of combining the proposed account and some theories of reasons has been to attempt to bridge the gap between debates about weakness of will and dispute over theories of reasons, thereby making a distinctive contribution to the philosophical literature. Moreover, it suggests further lines of research since this distinctive contribution has brought up a methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to prefer a theory of reasons that has the right (or better) implication(s) about cases of weakness of will. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to settle this question. However, this is an interesting and important question suggesting that philosophers from different areas interact more, put theories together and see what happens. This is a proposal for an approach to philosophical study.

Taken as a whole, then, this thesis has pursued two main purposes. First, it has aimed to develop a plausible philosophical account of weakness of will that can make sense of a range of cases where we attribute weakness of will to the

agent. Second, it has been an attempt to consider what happens when the proposed account of weakness of will is conjoined with some theories of reasons.

To achieve these goals, this thesis has consisted of three main parts. Part 1, comprising chapters 2 and 3, has presented two main accounts of weakness of will in the philosophical literature: the traditional account and Holton's view.

Chapter 2 has expounded Davidson's account as an influential traditional view. According to his view, weakness of will (equated with *akrasia*) arises when the agent violates the principle of continence instructing her to take the action she believes best in the light of all reasons considered by her (Davidson, 1970, p. 41). I have then illustrated that there are some cases intuitively seeming to be cases of weakness of will that cannot fit into Davidson's picture. That is because the agent does not violate the principle of continence in acting as she does. Rather, she abandons her prior intention as a result of succumbing to temptation, and proceeds to take the tempted course of action. This led us to take an interest in Holton's view.

I have explained Holton's account (2009) in chapter 3. His account is able to make sense of those cases of weakness of will that Davidson's account fails to do, cases offered in chapter 2 (section 4). Weakness of will, for Holton, has nothing to do with the agent's better (or all-things-considered) judgement, but instead with her intention. On his view, weakness of will is, roughly, over-ready acting against one's prior intention (Holton, 2009, pp. 70-71). This means he denies that cases involving judgement-violation, but not intention-violation, are cases of weakness of will.

I have ended chapter 3 by bringing up Mele's suggestion for understanding weakness of will. According to him, weakness of will can be characterised in terms of violating *evaluative* and *executive* commitments; where these refer to a better judgement and intention respectively (Mele, 2012, pp. 14-16).

Mele's view seemed promising since it is able to make sense of both kinds of case, namely, cases of judgement-violation and cases of intention-violation, as cases of weakness of will. As a result, I have followed the line of thought suggested by him (2012) in order to develop my view of weakness of will.

Part 2, comprised of chapters 4 and 5, offers my positive account of weakness of will and argues for its plausibility. In chapter 4, I have elaborated my view of weakness of will according to which weakness of will arises when the agent withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her practical commitment(s) without a good enough normative reason. Then, I have made it clear that although my proposed account of weakness of will is inspired by Mele's view, it goes beyond that. Mele's account of weakness of will includes *evaluative* and *executive* commitments as practical commitments, whereas the notion of "practical commitment", on my picture, refers to *reasoning*, *executive* and *instrumental* commitments. Further, Mele has not spelled out why the agent is practically committed to act in a certain way while I have addressed this issue by referring to Requirements\* of rationality. Moreover, Mele has not made it clear whether he considers any role for the agent's practical reason in the explanation of weakness of will whereas I have explicitly argued for the crucial role that the agent's practical reason plays in our attribution of weakness of will to cases.

To back up my view of weakness of will and show that the intuitions to which I have appealed are to some extent representative, I have pointed out the findings of May and Holton's empirical work (2012). According to them, either judgement-violation or intention-violation (or both) is (are) not sufficient to explain weakness of will. Our attribution of weakness of will is also affected by normative factor(s) (2012, pp. 356-357).

Chapter 5 argues for the adequacy of my proposed account and its superiority to the standard rival view and the modified rival view. These two rival views arise since one may claim that weakness of will is better understood in terms of the violation of Requirements\* of rationality, the view termed the standard rival view. Alternatively, (s)he may suggest that weakness of will can be characterised as the violation of Requirements\* of rationality without a good enough normative reason, the view labelled the modified rival view. To show the superiority of my proposed account to these two rival views, I have offered some concrete cases, and considered the application of these two rival views and mine to these cases. The results support the conclusion that my proposed account is both successful in explaining various cases and is superior to these two rival views.

Having accomplished the first aim of this thesis, I devote Part 3 to fulfilling the second goal, which is to see what happens when we elaborate my proposed account further by adding to it a theory of reasons. To undertake the task of Part 3, I have combined the proposed account with two prominent theories of reasons, namely, Humeanism and Kantianism, in chapters 6 and 7 respectively.

In chapter 6, I have explained Proportionalism as the standard Humean theory of weighting. Then, I have combined my proposed account of weakness of will with broadly Proportionalist Humeanism. This conjoint view implies that weakness of will is extremely rare, if not impossible. In reaction to this implication, I have suggested that this implication can be deemed as interesting, but not problematic. Among other responses, I have also spelled out Smith's idealising and Schroeder's Hypotheticalist views, and demonstrated that these two versions of Humeanism do not give rise to this implication when they are conjoined with the proposed account. It follows that it is not the case that the combination of the proposed account and Humeanism unavoidably yields this implication.

The results of this study have indicated that the proposed account of weakness of will is at least minimally plausible when it is conjoined with the Humean theory of reasons. That is because we have not found any undercutting implication that would be conclusive evidence against my proposed account.

Considering the implication of conjoining my proposed account and Humeanism raises the following methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to take account of its results in deciding whether Humeanism is to be preferred to another theory of reasons. Suppose there are some advocates of the proposed account who give a positive answer to this methodological question. The results of considering the implication of this conjoint view suggest the following to them. If those advocates view the implication that weakness of will hardly ever occurs as interesting, they may take this implication as a consideration in favour of broadly Proportionalist Humeanism. If they regard it as problematic, they may count it as evidence that some other versions of

Humeanism, such as Smith's view and Schroeder's account, are superior to broadly Proportionalist Humeanism.

Chapter 7 considers what happens when my proposed account is conjoined with a Kantian theory of reasons. This conjoint view apparently yields two implications. The first is that too many cases, on the conjoint view, seem to turn out to be cases of weakness of will. I labelled it Too Many Cases objection. The second implication is the impossibility of inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will.

As regards Too Many Cases objection, the first reaction has been that if this conjoint view has this implication, this can be seen as interesting, but not necessarily problematic. Among other response, I have also argued that it is not actually the case that too many cases appear to be cases of weakness of will, within the conjoint framework. With respect to the supposed implication that inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will, on the conjoint picture, seems to be impossible, I have illustrated that this is not the case by referring to the Huckleberry Finn example.

These results suggest that it is not in fact the case that the conjoint view has these two alleged implications. As we have not found any implication that conclusively undercuts the plausibility of my proposed account, the findings of chapter 7 support the idea that the proposed account is at least minimally plausible when it is conjoined with Kantianism.

Considering the implications of the conjoint view at issue raises the following methodological question. This is whether it is legitimate to take account of its results in deciding whether Kantianism is plausible. Suppose

there are some advocates of the proposed account who give a positive answer to this question. Then, these results suggest the following to them. The two alleged implications under consideration fail to undercut the plausibility of Kantianism. That is because it is not, I have argued, the case that the conjoint view implies that too many cases turn out to be cases of weakness of will. Nor does it imply that inverse akrasia as a case of weakness of will is impossible.

So far I have summarised the main points and results of our discussion in each chapter. Taken as a whole, I am confident that the proposed account of weakness of will gives us important insights into our attribution of weakness of will to the agent in a wide range of cases. According to the proposed account, cases of weakness of will arise when the agent makes herself committed to act in a certain way; however, she later withdraws (abandons, revises or acts against) her commitment and takes the opposite course of action while her reason for which she acts as she does is not good enough, in a normative sense, to justify acting as she does.

To develop a plausible philosophical account of weakness of will, I have tracked my intuition about whether a given case is a case of weakness of will. To the extent that exercising intuition in philosophical investigation and the reliability of the intuitions to which I have appealed are controversial, my view of weakness of will is open to question. Nonetheless, by referring to the results of May and Holton's empirical work (2012), I have shown that the intuitions to which I have appealed are to some extent representative as my proposed account of weakness of will appears to be in line with their findings.

So long as or to the extent that we accept the guidance and the correctness of the intuitions to which I have appealed, we have found that my proposed account is not only adequate in explaining a range of cases of weakness of will but also superior to the standard rival view, the modified rival view, the traditional view and Holton's account (2009). To see why, in chapter 5, I have indicated the superiority of my proposed account over the standard and modified rival views. As regards the traditional view and Holton's account (2009), the results of May and Holton's experiments (2012) show that either judgement-violation or intention-violation (or both) is (are) not by itself (themselves) sufficient to explain weakness of will. Rather, common sense verdict on whether a given case is a case of weakness of will is affected by normative factor(s) (2012, p. 342; p. 356; p. 357). If that is the case, I take it that my proposed account of weakness of will is superior to the traditional view and Holton's account (2009). That is because it includes both kinds of case, namely, judgement-violation and intention-violation, *inter alia*. In addition, it takes the agent's practical reason into account as a normative factor affecting our judgements about whether a given case is a case of weakness of will.

Further, when the proposed account is combined with some prominent theories of reasons, the conjoint views have not yielded any implication that would be conclusive evidence against the plausibility of my proposed account.

In this thesis, I have made a specific proposal for understanding the notion of weakness of will. This proposed view is such that it can, as I have shown, account for a range of cases where weakness of will is attributed to the agent. Further, it is a unified account that we would not get just by putting the traditional view and Holton's account together. Having offered this account of

weakness of will, I have tried to elaborate it as much as I possibly can. I have addressed various issues. Among other things, I have considered what happens when my proposed account of weakness of will is combined with a theory of reasons.

Nonetheless, there are some questions that I have not been able to discuss, such as the methodological question arising from conjoining my proposed account and a theory of reasons. This question is whether it is legitimate to take as a consideration for preferring a theory of reasons that it has the right (or better) implications for cases of weakness of will.

This methodological question is a proposal for an approach to philosophical enquiry. It suggests philosophers from different areas interact more with each other, and try to build more bridges between philosophical topics.

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