Dissertation Abstract
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A clear understanding of the normative world should involve an explanation of why we have the reasons we do. Yet common-sense thinking generates a puzzle. If there's a reason to do something, we can explain why that reason counts in favor of doing it with the fact that it would be good in some way. At the same time, it's also explainable by non-evaluative properties that make doing it good. Suppose the traffic gives us a reason to leave early for the airport. The deeper reason might be the non-evaluative fact that the traffic would cause us to miss our flight, or it might be the value of making the flight. Although both reasons are perfectly good at the everyday level, it would be wrong to say they both contribute to the fundamental normative story of why traffic favors leaving early. Because both are ways of calling attention to the same idea, that making the flight is our goal, they shouldn't be independent. One of these considerations is a reason only because the other is. If we considered each as its own independent reason we'd be double-counting. So which is the more fundamental one? Where does the reason really come from? I argue that value properties—like the value of making our flight—give the most basic, and therefore best, reasons.

Many contemporary philosophers take the opposite tack and point to value-making properties instead as the things that give the primary reasons, following the lead of Elizabeth Anderson, T.M. Scanlon, and Derek Parfit. It can seem as though values don't give any reasons at all, since good-making properties are sufficient on their own to generate all the reasons we have. Philosophers who think this way seem to be aligning the direction of normative explanation with the direction of metaphysical explanation. I argue that this popular view is mistaken by drawing a parallel to the mental causation debate in philosophy of mind. If reasons must be given by what would have been metaphysically sufficient to account for them, then a regress in which the power to give reasons drains away into unappreciable micro-properties seems inevitable. And if the most basic reasons are unappreciable, we are at the very least alienated from them, and they may not exist at all.

We can see why reasons have their source in values by reflecting on two well-known doctrines: *ought implies can* and *the guise of the good*. The former shows that (a) considerations that count in favor must also be possibly motivating, otherwise the normative loses its connection to real actions. A plausible version of the latter is that (b) the most basic explanation of our motivations is that we see what we want as good or bad in some way. Both principles are intuitive, if controversial. I show that both (a) and (b) can withstand the usual objections while keeping their initial plausibility. This line of reasoning leads us to the proper form of normative explanation: x gives a reason because it is valuable in some way.

Opponents of this view appear to confuse two distinct questions: what the most fundamental reasons are, and what the considerations that give reasons metaphysically consist in. Running these together is a mistake. Pain might consist of C-fiber firings, but that's no cause to think they give better reasons to alleviate suffering than the pain itself does. A virtue of my approach is that it keeps these questions separate. Values are fundamental to normative reasons, but value-making properties explain the ontological ground of those reasons. Minding the difference between these gives us a third way: a way to secure a role for values in the normative world without the excesses of Mooreanism or Platonism on the one hand, and without alienating us from reasons on the other.