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Tamar Schapiro, "Feeling Like It: A Theory of Inclination and Will"

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Tamar Schapiro. *Feeling Like It: A Theory of Inclination and Will.* Oxford University Press 2021. 182 pp. \$98.00 USD (Hardcover 9780198862932).

When agents are already moved by an immediate appeal of a situation to act in a certain way, it is still possible (if not required) for them to ask whether it is right to act upon that immediate motivation. Kantian philosophers have recognized this phenomenon as the ‘reflexive structure of human motivation.’ Tamar Schapiro has recently developed a dualist theory of motivation to account for this reflexive feature of human agency: having a certain inclination, one is *inclined* but not yet *determined* to act in a certain way; in this ‘moment of drama’ agents experience a crisis in determining their will. According to her, the crisis has to do with the mismatch of two senses of motivation, namely *inclination* and *will*—respectively dominant before and after one determines her will in the moment of drama.

Suppose I have a strong desire for chocolate. I spot a chocolate cake and immediately feel motivated to have a slice. At this point, a part of me has already taken a step forward. But I still need to decide if it is really the right thing to do, especially since I have recently started a diet. When I step back to determine my will, the *chocolatiness* of the cake may not seem salient or even relevant anymore. Having an inclination, according to Schapiro, I am in a ‘moment of drama’ (9–12). In this moment, my will is at a crossroads. If everything goes well, I will end up avoiding the cake and sticking to my diet. But if I am weak, I will *give in* to the inclination and eat the cake.

Schapiro describes inclinations in terms of three seemingly incompatible features (31). The first feature, according to Schapiro, is ‘the non-voluntariness of inclination.’ I cannot be inclined by volition; my contemporaneous inclinations are given, and in this sense, they are not exactly mine. Note that my motivation when I am moved by an *inclination* have some of the cake is different from my motivation after I step back and determine my *will* based on my better judgment. In the first case, I am passively moved, while in the second case, I actively move myself. Having an inclination, I find myself already motivated to eat the chocolate cake, and in deliberation, I need to decide what to do given that I am already moved to do so. Secondly, according to Schapiro, inclination plays a ‘deliberative role.’ While it is true that my inclinations are not voluntary or even truly mine, when moved by an inclination, I am not merely dragged by a brute, external force such as the wind or the tide. Rather, I desire to do something only if I perceive something good or reasonable in doing the action. True, inclinations are not conclusions of practical reasoning, but they provide us with the *starting point* of deliberation. Thirdly, inclinations put an ‘asymmetric pressure’ on the will. ‘It is easier for you,’ Schapiro writes, ‘to go along with your inclination than not to’ (31). Her dualist theory of motivation aims at accounting for these three features regarding ‘the role *inclinations* play in relation to *will*’ (89).

To illustrate these three features, Schapiro employs a metaphor: being inclined resembles having an *inner animal* (Ch. 4). First, it propels me forward independent of my volition. Secondly, this semi-agent creature sees to-be-eatenness in the cake and initiates my deliberation. Finally, it puts pressure on my will to choose what it is already acted for. This state of motivational two-in-oneness, according to Schapiro, is a *sui generis* feature of human agency. Note that by



acknowledging the second feature of inclinations, we accept ‘the practical thinking view’ of desires: a desire is always accompanied by a perception of what is desirable, good, or reasonable, in the object of the desire. Metaphorically, my inner animal is not drawn to the cake unless it *sees* something desirable, e.g., the chocolatiness, in it.

The inner animal view successfully captures the first feature of inclinations. According to this view, my inclinations belong to a source which, though internal to me as a whole, is still external to, as Kant puts it, my ‘power of choice.’ When I step back from my inclination to determine my will, I need to take into account the actions of the inner animal as if they were features of my environment. Note that the standard Humean conception of agency cannot properly capture this feature. That is, the monists’ distinctions between weighty and unweighty or *prima facie* and all-things-considered reasons cannot do justice to the *inner conflict* which agents undergo in ‘the moment of drama.’ Accordingly, they fail to account for the ‘non-voluntariness of inclinations.’

Schapiro explains the other two features of inclinations by referring to one’s success or failure in the moment of drama; in this moment you, *qua* will, either succeed or fail in dealing with the non-voluntary inclinations: you succeed if you humanize your inclinations and *incorporate* them into a human maxim. It is the ‘high road’ you can take. This enables us to grasp Schapiro’s explanation for the second feature, namely the ‘deliberative role’ inclinations play in our human deliberations. Of course, the inner animal cannot tell you, *qua* free agent, what to do. It cannot even talk or provide a ‘proposal’ for you (as Korsgaard wishes), because there is a *mismatch* between the *actions* of inner animal and the sort of *thoughts* we need for our human reasoning. But still, the actions of the inner animal play a ‘deliberative role’ by providing ‘raw material’ or ‘starting point’ for your human deliberation.

On the other hand, in the moment of drama, you fail if you *give in* to your inclination. In taking this ‘low’ road, you dehumanize yourself. According to Schapiro, this helps us explain the third feature, namely the ‘asymmetric pressure’ of inclinations on the will. Granted, Schapiro insists, inclination *per se* cannot put pressure on will; a human will is *free* in the sense that it is not necessitated by inclinations. However, having an inclination, ‘we are faced with a perfect opportunity to flee the burden of our freedom’ (147) and become as close as possible to acting like an animal. So, by giving in to your inclination in the moment of drama, you would eat the cake but ‘not as a way of doing anything’ (152)

So far briefly summarized what Schapiro calls the dualistic theory of motivation which focuses on inclination and will. Note that we can think of a structurally similar argument for dualism about normative reasons. That is, not only do agents act for a reason when they actively do what they take as the right thing to do, but also, they act for a reason (albeit sometimes a defective one) when they passively act on an immediate incentive. However, Schapiro does not consider this proposal because she denies any genuine normative roles for inclinations:

It is neither a proposal, nor an argument, nor a reason. It is not even a “seeming” or “prima facie” reason. It is simply not a move in deliberation. This incentive, in its raw form, prior to any further act of incorporation, cannot put deliberative pressure on you, as a decider. (147.)

However, given that Schapiro's motivational dualism subscribes to 'the practical thinking view' of desires, it is easy to see how dualism about reasons enters the picture: being inclined requires perceiving something normative in the object of the inclination. So, before we step back and determine our will based on our active deliberation, there is something desirable, reasonable, or good which has already moved us forward. In other words, at least, our inner animals already have some reasons for action. Admittedly, these reasons are not truly *ours* since we are motivated by them only passively, nevertheless, they may play a genuine role in guiding our actions. To recap, by providing a dualistic account of motivation, Schapiro comes very close to accepting a dualistic account of reasons. However, she ultimately fails to do so, because, due to her commitments to the Kantian monism about reasons and action, her theory does not accommodate the normative role of inclinations.

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