

Deliberative Agency, Self-Control, and the Divided Mind

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Abstract: According to a widely endorsed claim, intentional action is brought about by an agent's desires in accordance with these desires' respective motivational strength. As Jay Wallace has argued, though, this "hydraulic model" of the aetiology of intentional action has a serious flaw: it fails to leave room for genuine deliberative agency. Drawing on recent developments in the debate on self-control, the article argues that Wallace's criticism can be addressed once we combine the hydraulic model with a so-called "divided mind" account of self-control.

Keywords: motivational strength perspective, hydraulicism, deliberative agency, self-control, divided mind account of self-control

1. Introduction

ACCORDING TO AN influential view about the aetiology of intentional action, intentional action is determined by one's desires in accordance with these desires' respective motivational strength.¹ Although widely endorsed,² this view has also been the object of heavy criticism.

One influential example of such criticism stems from Jay Wallace (1999a, 1999b; see also Wallace, 2001). According to Wallace (1999a, p. 633), this

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1 To clarify, I understand this view as making a conceptual claim about the connection between desires and their respective motivational strength on the one hand and intentional action on the other hand. This view implies, very roughly speaking, that whenever an agent acts intentionally (or tries to perform an intentional action), she will act on her *strongest* desire. (This way of putting things is deliberately vague for reasons that will become clear in the course of the article.) Note that this view flows naturally from a certain influential view about the nature of intentional action – namely, the view that in order to count as an intentional action, an event must be caused (in the right way) by one's desires (in combination with one's beliefs) – together with the (equally influential) view that desires "come equipped" with different degrees of action-causing powers or, equivalently, motivational strength. Finally, it should be stressed that the view that intentional action is determined by one's desires in accordance with these desires' respective motivational strength does not rule out that desires determine intentional action *via* the production of mediating intentions (on this, see also Mele, 1992).

2 This view has been explicitly endorsed, *inter alia*, by Alston (1974, 1977), Davidson (1970), Mele (1987, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2003, 2014), Pettit and Smith (1990, 1993), Kennett and Smith (1996, 1997) and Sinhababu (2017).

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view – which he dubs the “hydraulic model” – “leaves no real room for genuine deliberative agency”. Therefore, Wallace claims, we ought to abandon it in favour of a volitionalist model; rather than claiming that intentional action is determined by one’s desires and their respective motivational strength, we should contend that intentional action is brought about by the exercise of a so-called volitional capacity: a capacity for choice wholly unconstrained by one’s desires.

In this article, I will argue that these claims are premature: drawing on recent developments in the debate on self-control, I will show that we can make room for deliberative agency even within the confines of the “hydraulic model”. More specifically, I will seek to establish that if we combine this model with a so-called “divided mind” account of self-control (Sripada, 2010, 2014, see also Alston, 1977, and Dill and Holton, 2014), it leaves room for deliberative agency after all.

The rest of this article is arranged as follows. Section 2 presents Wallace’s reasoning for the claim that the hydraulic model of intentional action leaves no room for genuine deliberative agency. Section 3 argues that this claim can be refuted once we combine this model with the divided mind account of self-control. Section 4 considers an objection. Section 5 concludes the discussion.

2. The Hydraulic Model as a Threat to Deliberative Agency

2.1 *Acting on one’s deliberative conclusion as a “fortuitous coincidence”*

At the core of the hydraulic model is the idea that intentional action is determined by an agent’s desires in accordance with these desires’ respective motivational strength. More specifically, proponents of this model would endorse some version or other of what has been dubbed the “Law of Desire” (Clarke, 1994). This action-theoretical principle, very roughly speaking, says that whenever an agent acts intentionally (or tries to perform an intentional action), she will act on whichever of her desires is her (motivationally) strongest.^{3,4}

According to Jay Wallace (1999a, 1999b), the hydraulic model has a serious flaw, though: due to its endorsement of the Law of Desire, it fails to leave room for genuine deliberative agency. Let us have a closer look at this objection.

It is important to note that the hydraulic model (as Wallace construes it) does not rule out that agents can engage in deliberation and thereby arrive at a practical judgement, that is, at a judgement about what there is most reason to

3 Note that this is a deliberately crude formulation of the Law of Desire which none of its proponents would endorse, but which is helpful for presenting Wallace’s criticism. For significantly refined versions, see, for example, Mele (1992, ch. 3 and 2003, ch. 6). (For a recent defence of a (strongly qualified) version of the Law of Desire, see also Barnes, 2019.)

4 I will usually omit the specification “motivationally” going forward.

do.⁵ What this model cannot account for, according to Wallace, is the phenomenon of *determining one's action on the basis of one's practical judgement* once one has arrived at it. The core of Wallace's reasoning for that claim is contained in the following passage:

[The hydraulic model] pictures deliberative agency as consisting, essentially, in two distinct moments. There is, first, the agent's practical or evaluative judgment about what there is most reason to do, or what it would be best to do on the whole; and there is, second, the agent's motivational state, which is a function of the causal strength of the desires to which the agent is subject. If the agent is lucky, these two states will be in alignment with each other, so that the agent is most strongly motivated to perform the action that the agent believes, at the time, to be best. But whether this kind of alignment is achieved is not really something that is up to the agent to determine. (Wallace, 1999b, p. 635)

Due to its reliance on the Law of Desire, Wallace argues, the hydraulic model is committed to the claim that an agent can perform the action which corresponds to her practical judgement only if her practical judgement and her strongest desire align, that is, only if she not only judges that she has most reason to perform a certain action, but also most desires to do so. However, as Wallace furthermore contends, whether such an alignment is achieved cannot really be said to be something which is up to the agent to determine but rather seems like a "fortuitous coincidence" (Wallace, 1999b, p. 637). Of course, an agent might *happen* to desire most what she believes she has most reason to do. But it seems that she might just as well desire most to do something else instead. After all, as Wallace repeatedly emphasizes, our desires are states which are merely "given to us" (Wallace, 1999b, p. 631), which we just "find ourselves in" (see Wallace, 1999b, p. 631), and which may simply persist and continue to exert their motivational force even if we judge that satisfying them is *not* what we have most reason to do (Wallace, 2001, p. 32). However, if this is so, then it appears that all intentional action is "traced to the operation of forces within us, with respect to which we as agents are ultimately passive" (Wallace, 1999b, p. 633). And, in consequence, "real agency seems to drop out of view" (Wallace, 1999b, p. 633).⁶

5 For the purposes of this article, I will construe the content of an agent's practical judgement as a proposition about what there is *most reason to do*. The worry Wallace raises for the hydraulic model, however, does not depend on this. It also arises if we instead construe the content of an agent's practical judgement as a proposition about what would be, all things considered, *best to do or the thing to do*.

6 As mentioned above, Wallace also proposes an alternative model for the aetiology of intentional action. This so-called *volitionalist model* seeks to explain intentional action by the fact that the agent exercises her so-called *volitional capacity*: a capacity for choice wholly unconstrained by one's desires (Wallace, 1999a, p. 638). Since the goal of this article is to undermine the motivation for adopting such an alternative model, I will not discuss the volitionalist model in any detail.

2.2 *Self-control to the rescue?*

It is easy to agree with Wallace that the picture of deliberative agency which the hydraulic model seems to yield so far is implausible. If we could only ever perform the action, we, at the time, *happen* to desire most, then the whole process of determining which action to perform by determining which action we have most reason to perform would appear pointless. As Wallace (2001, pp. 32–33) rightly points out, our deliberative practices seem to only make sense on the assumption that we have a capacity for acting on our deliberative verdicts *even if* (as he puts it) “our given desires are feeble or rebellious” (Wallace, 1999b, p. 637).

However, proponents of the hydraulic model might reply that the problem Wallace articulates permits of an easy fix. This is because Wallace’s criticism seems to ignore an agent’s capacity for self-control which allows her to intervene in her own motivational set and to bring her behaviour into alignment with her practical judgement even if her practical judgement and her strongest desire should initially diverge. Thus, once we add the capacity for self-control to the picture, we seem to have made room for deliberative agency within the confines of the hydraulic model.

Now, Wallace does consider this line of response (see Wallace, 1999b). According to him, it fails to succeed, however: although the hydraulic model leaves room for certain forms of self-control, the forms of self-control which are possible within the hydraulic model, Wallace contends, do not help one to make room for genuine deliberative agency. The next section details the reasoning that underlies this further claim.

2.3 *Self-control and agency*

Wallace begins by arguing that, due to their endorsement of the Law of Desire, proponents of the hydraulic model are committed to what he dubs the “cold shower paradigm” (see Wallace, 1999b, p. 636) – the claim that we “achieve control by devising strategies to influence causally the motivational strength of the desires to which we are subject” (Wallace, 1999b, pp. 635–636). According to Wallace, this gives rise to the following objection:

[T]o suppose that self-control must always conform to the cold shower paradigm turns us into passive bystanders at the scene of our own actions. We don’t really determine which actions we perform directly, rather we attempt to manipulate the psychological influences to which we are subject, in the hope that *they* will eventually bring it about that we do what we judge to be best. (Wallace, 1999b, p. 636)

Taken by itself, this argument does not seem very strong. Even if we grant to Wallace that, within the confines of the hydraulic model, self-control must always operate by “influenc[ing] causally the motivational strength of the desires to which we are subject”,⁷ it is hard to see how this fact should be sufficient to turn

7 In section 3.3, I will argue that we need not grant this claim.

us into “passive bystanders at the scene of our own actions” (Wallace, 1999b, p. 636). After all, it seems to be *up to us* to initiate (and sustain) exercises of self-control when our practical judgement and our strongest desire diverge. And, by initiating (and sustaining) such exercises, *we, qua* agents, seem to play an active part in determining how we will act in the respective situation and, more specifically, in whether we will act in accordance with our practical judgements.

Wallace, however, anticipates a reply along these lines:

Agency, to the extent it survives at all, seems restricted to the initiation of such strategies of indirect self-manipulation. But consistent development of the hydraulic approach banishes it from the scene even there. Either the exercise of control gets traced to the occurrence of a psychological event – such as the agent’s thinking a certain thought – that is not an intentional action at all. Or room is left for the deliberate initiation of a strategy of control, but this in turn is conceived as the result of further causal forces operative within the agent’s psychological economy at the time when the exercise of self-control began. (Wallace, 1999b, p. 636; emphasis added)

Proponents of the hydraulic approach, the thought goes, have two options when it comes to the initiation of exercises of self-control both of which, however, “banish [agency] from the scene”.

The first option is to conceive of the initiation of exercises of self-control as something that is *not under our intentional control* – for example, the triggering of a disposition to think about a tempting object in negative terms.⁸ It is easy to see that choosing this option does not help us address our concerns. For, on this option, exercises of self-control would indeed be something that *merely happens to us*. *We, qua* agents, could not be said to play any active part in bringing them about.

The second option is to conceive of the initiation of exercises of self-control as something that is *under our intentional control*. At first glance, the second option clearly seems more promising. According to Wallace, though, a closer inspection reveals that it is of as little use as the first option; if proponents of the hydraulic model claimed that exercises of self-control were something that an agent can intentionally bring about, then the occurrence of such exercises would have to be “conceived as the result of further causal forces operative within the agent’s psychological economy at the time when the exercise of self-control began” (Wallace, 1999b, p. 636). This way of putting things is a bit cryptic. I think Wallace’s idea is this: if proponents of the hydraulic model conceived of exercises of self-control as something that is under the agent’s intentional control, then the occurrence of such exercises would have to be traced back to the *same kind of causal forces* which, according to the hydraulic model, must be present in *every*

⁸ This “non-actional” view of self-control has been defended by Jeanette Kennett and Michael Smith (see Kennett and Smith, 1996, 1997).

case of intentional action, namely *desires*. However, if exercises of self-control are dependent on desires as well, then the problem detailed in the last section simply seems to re-emerge: the occurrence of such exercises would depend (once again) on our being in a state that is “merely given to us”, which we either “find ourselves in or not”, and with respect to which *we, qua* agents, are *essentially passive*.⁹

I believe that the concern which is at the bottom of the dilemma just laid out is a legitimate one. If self-control cannot be conceived as something in which the agent has an active part to play, then adding self-control to the picture does not seem to help proponents of the hydraulic model to make room for genuine deliberative agency. However, *contra* Wallace, I do not believe that addressing this concern requires us to abandon the hydraulic model. Instead, as I will argue in the next section, it will suffice to combine this model with a certain approach to self-control.

3. Securing Deliberative Agency within the Hydraulic Model: The Divided Mind Account of Self-Control

3.1 *The divided mind account of self-control: core assumptions*

According to the divided mind approach, adequately accounting for self-control requires us to embrace some kind of “motivational partitioning”. Several versions of the divided mind approach have been offered in the literature. For the purpose of this article, I will rely on a specific version, though, namely the one defended by Chandra Sripada (2010, 2014).¹⁰ At the core of this version are two claims:

9 According to some theorists, proponents of the hydraulic model *also* need to answer the question of how an agent who faces a presently occurring temptation (such as a sudden desire for a cigarette) *can undertake an exercise of self-control in the first place*, given that (i) such an agent (seemingly) *desires most to succumb to the temptation at hand* (i.e., to smoke the cigarette rather than to refrain from doing so) and that (ii), given the Law of Desire, agents will always act on their strongest desire. This is the so-called puzzle of synchronic self-control (for classic statements of the puzzle, see Alston, 1977, and Mele, 1987).

Proponents of the hydraulic model have reacted to this puzzle in two different ways: they have either rejected claim (i), i.e., the description of a tempted agent’s desire profile on which this puzzle relies (see, e.g., Sinhababu, 2017). Or they have tried to show that, despite initial appearances to the contrary, claims (i) and (ii) do not imply that (synchronic) self-control is impossible (see, e.g., Alston, 1977; Mele, 1987, 1995, 1997, 2014; Kennett and Smith, 1996, 1997; Zhu, 2005; Sripada, 2014).

I argue in my unpublished manuscript “The Mismatch Problem” that divided mind accounts of self-control which I shall introduce in the third section of the article provide a very convincing solution to this puzzle (on this, see also Alston, 1977, and Sripada, 2010, 2014). This issue, however, is beyond the scope of the present article.

10 For further versions of divided mind accounts of self-control, see Alston (1977) and Dill and Holton (2014).

- (1) Divided Motivational Architecture: the human mind contains (at least) two distinct motivational systems, *the deliberative motivational system* and *the impulsive motivational system*.¹¹
- (2) Proprietary Action-Thesis: self-control is a “proprietary action” of the deliberative motivational system. Only the deliberative motivational system can initiate (and sustain) exercises of self-control.

Let me briefly expand on this. Claim (1) amounts to a form of *motivational partitioning*. The human mind, this claim says, contains (at least) two distinct motivational systems, that is, two sets of states (or processes) which serve the function of motivating action. However, as claim (2) states, only one of the two motivational systems, the deliberative motivational system, or, more precisely, only the desires belonging to this system (from now on: *deliberative desires*), can initiate *those actions which constitute exercises of self-control*. Desires belonging to the impulsive motivational system (from now on: *impulsive desires*), by contrast, cannot make any motivational contribution, either positive or negative, to the occurrence of these actions (see Sripada, 2014, pp. 51–54).

I will henceforth call the actions that constitute exercises of self-control *control actions*. Control actions may take various forms. For example, an agent may engage in reappraisal, that is, *reinterpret* an object of attraction in a negative light (or an object of aversion in a positive light) or, alternatively, *redirect her focus of attention* (either to the negative consequences of succumbing or to the positive consequences of resisting or to something else entirely as in self-distraction). Or she may simply *directly suppress* a wayward impulse.¹²

By performing control actions, an agent can *actively intervene in her own motivational set*. More specifically, she can thereby bring her overt action into line with her practical judgement, and thus determine her overt action on the basis of the latter, even if her practical judgement and her strongest desire should (initially) diverge.¹³

Prima facie, adding control actions to the picture may seem like just what we need to make room for deliberative agency within the confines of the hydraulic model. However, given that, on the divided mind account, control actions are themselves determined by *desires*, we appear to run straightforwardly into Wallace’s dilemma.

11 I largely follow Sripada’s (2014) terminology. However, Sripada uses the term “emotional motivational system” rather than “impulsive motivational system”. Since I believe that the former term is somewhat misleading (even by Sripada’s own lights), I have replaced it with the latter term.

12 This list is not meant to be exhaustive. For a recent attempt to vindicate the claim that, despite their variety, control actions constitute a unified theoretical kind, see Sripada (2020).

13 This way of putting things is deliberately vague: I elaborate on the issue of how exactly control actions *operate* on the divided mind account in section 3.3.

3.2 *The divided mind account and Wallace's dilemma*

Let us briefly recapitulate. According to Wallace, adding self-control to the picture does not help the hydraulic model to make room for deliberative agency, since this model cannot conceive of exercises of self-control as exercises of agency. Wallace, more specifically, claimed that proponents of the hydraulic model face two options when it comes to self-control, both of which “banish agency from the scene”: either (i) they contend that self-control is something the agent cannot intentionally employ; or (ii) they contend that self-control is something the agent can intentionally employ. *Prima facie*, option (ii) clearly seemed more promising. However, if exercises of self-control are intentional actions, then, within the confines of the hydraulic model, they, too, must be determined by *desires*. And this, Wallace had argued earlier, implies that *the agent has no active part to play in bringing them about*.

As became clear in the last section, the divided mind account of self-control endorses option (ii), that is, it claims that exercises of self-control are themselves intentional actions. However, as this account additionally stresses, the actions that constitute exercises of self-control (control actions) are *special*. Although they come in various forms, they all share the same aetiology: they are determined *exclusively* by a certain subset of the agent's desires, namely her *deliberative desires*.

This additional claim, which, as I pointed out in the last section, is at the very core of the divided mind account, allows us to avoid Wallace's dilemma. This is so because, as I will argue next, the fact that an action is determined by *deliberative desires* does *not* undermine the claim that this action is a genuine exertion of agency.

Admittedly, deliberative desires are, as Wallace would put it, “causal forces”. As long as we remain within the confines of the hydraulic model, there is no way around this claim. However, once we take into account the specific roles deliberative desires play in the aetiology of overt intentional action, it seems unmotivated to regard them as “*agency-undermining*” forces.

To begin with, note that deliberative desires are neither “unruly” nor “recalcitrant” (see Sripada, 2014, pp. 50–51, 67). They do not have as their intentional object action opposed to the agent's practical judgement; nor do they simply persist and continue to exert their motivational force even if the agent judges that satisfying them is *not* what she has most reason to do.¹⁴ On the contrary, it is built into their very “job description” that they *promote* acting in line with the

14 In my unpublished manuscript “Unorthodox Self-Control and the Divided Mind”, I propose that the claim that deliberative desires align with an agent's practical judgement should, more specifically, be understood as describing cases of “normal” functioning (i.e., cases in which the deliberative motivational system fulfils its (biological) function). As I will furthermore argue at a later point in this article (section 4), deliberative desires already play important roles at the “pre-judgement stage”, that is, before the agent has arrived at a practical judgement.

agent's practical judgement: by providing the (exclusive) motivational base for control actions, deliberative desires enable the agent to translate her practical judgement into action even when she is encountering motivational opposition from wayward impulsive desires.

However, given that deliberative desires, by the very "job" they do within the mind of (human) agents, *promote* acting in line with one's practical judgement, and, more specifically, *help* one's practical judgement to prevail against wayward impulsive desires, it seems implausible to claim that if an action is determined by one's deliberative desires, then it does not count as a genuine exertion of one's agency. Indeed, it seems more appropriate to say that, rather than obstructing deliberative agency, deliberative desires *enable* deliberative agency in the first place.¹⁵

However, if (i) the fact that an action is determined by deliberative desires does *not* undermine the claim that this action is a genuine exertion of agency (as was just argued) and if (ii) control actions are determined *exclusively* by deliberative desires (as was pointed out before), then there seem to be no longer any obstacles to conceiving of exercises of self-control as exercises of agency. This, however, means that once we combine the hydraulic model with the divided mind account of self-control, the above dilemma can be avoided.

Furthermore, proponents of the hydraulic model could even concede that Wallace's dilemma contains a kernel of truth by endorsing the restricted claim that if an action is determined by one's *impulsive* desires, then it does not count as a genuine exertion of one's agency. Note that impulsive desires – unlike deliberative desires – operate largely independently from an agent's practical judgement (Sripada, 2014, pp. 50–51; see also Dill and Holton, 2014, p. 4). They *may* be in line with an agent's practical judgement. But if they are, then this is indeed, as Wallace put it, a "fortuitous coincidence", because they may just as well be out of line with that judgement. Moreover, impulsive desires may not merely obstruct an agent's *acting* on her practical judgement; but (as I will show in more detail in section 4) they may also, in various ways, obstruct her *arriving* at such a judgement. And, in view of these features, it may indeed seem apt to characterize them, as Wallace did, as states which are merely "given to us" or in which we "just find ourselves" *whether we like it or not*.

Here is another way of putting the point articulated in the previous paragraphs that draws on an observation offered by Al Mele (1995), in the context of discussing a worry similar to the one raised by Wallace. Ultimately, Wallace's objection seems to be based on the assumption that *all* desires, and hence the desires that underlie control actions, are essentially brute "agency-undermining"

15 I will provide further support for this claim in section 4.

forces.¹⁶ And if this were so, then, assuming the hydraulic model, “it would seem that, at bottom, agents lack a major say in what they do” (Mele, 1995, p. 56).

However, once we combine this model with the divided mind account of self-control,¹⁷ we can see where this assumption goes wrong: when it comes to the desires that are the paradigmatic “target states” of control actions, that is, an agent’s *impulsive* desires, the view of desires as agency-undermining forces seems correct. However, when it comes to the desires that “fuel” control actions, namely, an agent’s *deliberative* desires, this view is clearly misleading. Since it is built into the very “job description” of deliberative desires that they *promote acting on one’s practical judgement* (rather than obstructing such action), the picture of brute, agency-undermining forces seems inadequate when applied to *these* desires.

3.3 *The divided mind account and the cold shower paradigm*

In the last section, I have argued that due to its contention that control actions are determined exclusively by deliberative desires, the divided mind account can avoid Wallace’s dilemma and vindicate the claim that the agent has an active part to play in exercising self-control. There is, however, an issue on which I have been largely silent so far, namely, of how exactly the divided mind account would construe the *operation* of self-control. So, let me turn to this issue now.

For illustration, take the case of an agent whose *strongest deliberative* desire favours sticking to her diet while her *strongest impulsive* desire, which is also her *strongest overall* desire, favours eating a donut. Suppose further that the former desire (which aligns with the agent’s practical judgement) initiates an exercise of self-control in support of sticking to the diet.

Now, according to Sripada, one way in which this may allow the agent to determine her overt action on the basis of her practical judgement is by *changing the motivational strength of her desires*. For instance, our dieter may engage in reappraisal, that is, she may actively reinterpret the donut in a negative light (say, as a huge lump of fat) (see Sripada, 2014, pp. 42–43). If successful, the occurrence of this type of control action will bring it about that her *deliberative* desire to stick to the diet becomes her *strongest overall* desire,¹⁸ thus allowing her to

16 There is one passage (Wallace, 1999b, p. 63, n. 19), though, where Wallace himself appears to (partly) concede that such a picture would be oversimplistic.

17 Note that Mele himself would reject the divided mind account and instead advocates a “unified mind” approach to self-control (see Mele, 1987, 2014).

18 This result may be achieved in two different ways: the occurring control action (i.e., the act of reappraisal) may lead to a strengthening of the deliberative desire to stick to the diet and/or to a weakening of the impulsive desire to eat the donut.

determine her overt action on the basis of this desire and, thereby, on the basis of her practical judgement.

As Sripada furthermore argues, though, self-control need not always operate by changing the motivational strength of an agent's desires. (Human) agents, he contends, *additionally* have a form of self-control at their disposal which operates by (as he puts it) mentally "blocking" their wayward impulsive desires, that is, which can prevent a wayward impulsive desire's transition into overt action *even while it remains the agent's strongest overall desire*.¹⁹ To take up our example again, this further, more direct (or, in Sripada's terminology, *full-blooded*) form of self-control would enable our dieter to determine her overt action on the basis of her *deliberative* desire to stick to her diet, and thus on the basis of her practical judgement, *while leaving the motivational strength of her desires unaltered (i.e., even while her impulsive desire to eat the donut remains her strongest overall desire)* (see Sripada, 2014, pp. 42–43, 48ff).²⁰

Note that while the first way of how self-control operates on the divided mind account conforms to (what Wallace called) the "cold shower paradigm" (i.e., the view that self-control operates by changing the strength of an agent's desires), the second way *negates* this view. Remember that Wallace furthermore claimed that an account of self-control on which self-control *always conforms* to the cold shower paradigm would (once again) turn the agent into a "passive bystander" at the scene of her own actions. As I argued earlier (see section 2.3), this part of Wallace's criticism seemed less strong than the dilemma on which I focused in the last section. But it is, of course, advantageous that once we combine the hydraulic model with the divided mind account of self-control, we have the resources to address this part as well.

However, at this point, the following objection might emerge: in allowing for a form of self-control that negates the cold shower paradigm, the divided mind account appears to have *left the confines of the hydraulic model* and, indeed, become *incompatible* with that model.²¹ And, of course, if this is so, then we cannot defend the hydraulic model against Wallace's concerns by combining it with

19 One may ask how a desire can *fail* to determine an agent's overt action and still be said to be the desire with the overall greatest motivational strength. What accounts for this is the further assumption that motivational strength is a dispositional property which "can be retained even if the manifestations of the disposition are systematically blocked" (Sripada, 2014, p. 70, n. 8).

20 Sripada (2014) supports the claim that (human) agents have this form of self-control at their disposal with various arguments which, unfortunately, I lack the space to expand upon. However, one point in favour of this claim which does not require much elaboration is that it seems to fit nicely with the phenomenology of self-control: after all, we sometimes have the impression of resisting a wayward impulsive desire while its "motivational pull" appears unmitigated to us.

21 Remember that Wallace contended that proponents of the hydraulic model are *committed* to the claim that self-control always conforms to the cold shower paradigm (see section 2.3).

the divided mind account; these two approaches, the objection continues, simply do not yield a coherent whole.

Now, this objection might look convincing at first glance. However, a closer inspection reveals that it can be rejected.²² To see this, note that despite allowing for a form of self-control that negates the cold shower paradigm, the following two claims will still hold on the divided mind account:

- (1) If no exercise of self-control occurs (or if an occurring exercise of self-control is unsuccessful), then an agent's overt intentional action will be determined by the *strongest out of all of her desires – impulsive or deliberative*.
- (2) If a successful exercise of self-control occurs, then an agent's overt intentional action will be determined by her *strongest deliberative desire*.²³

Now, I would argue that, in view of accepting these two claims, the divided mind account still very much maintains the idea that is at the core of the hydraulic model, namely, that an agent's intentional action is determined by her desires and their respective motivational strength. The fact that in those cases in which the agent successfully exercises self-control her overt intentional action will be determined by a certain *subset* of her desires and these desires' respective motivational strength (rather than by the *totality* of her desires) seems to do nothing to undermine this idea.^{24,25}

22 Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for enabling me to see this.

23 For illustration, take (once again) our above example, that is, the case of the dieter who is tempted to eat a donut and who resists this temptation by successfully exercising self-control. Note that irrespective of which form of self-control our dieter successfully employs – (a) the form that operates on the strength of her desires or (b) the form that simply blocks her wayward impulsive desire while leaving the motivational strength of her desires unaltered – the *overt* action which she will perform as a result of this (or the *overt* behaviour which she will display as a result of this) will be determined by her *strongest deliberative* desire (namely, the desire to stick to the diet). (The only difference between scenario (a) and (b) is that, in (a) – but not in (b) – the agent's *strongest deliberative* desire which determines her overt action will also have become her strongest *overall* desire.)

24 Sripada (2014, pp. 55–60) additionally defends the claim that *whether* an occurring exercise of self-control (i.e., an act of reappraisal, of mental blocking, etc.) is *successful* partly depends on a factor he calls “regulatory strength”. By this term, he refers to the causal powers of the mental systems that implement exercises of self-control (i.e., which implement acts of reappraisal, of mental blocking, etc.). Note that this further claim also has a distinctive “hydraulic ring” to it.

25 For those who are unconvinced by the claims just made, let me stress that one could also accept the two core claims of the divided mind account – that is, the claim that (1) there are two distinct motivational systems, the deliberative motivational system and the impulsive motivational system, and the claim that (2) self-control is a proprietary action of the deliberative motivational system (see section 3.1) – and endorse the claim that *self-control always conforms to the cold shower paradigm*, that is, always operates by changing the strength of an agent's desires. (For an account along these lines, see Alston's (1977) version of a divided mind account of self-control). Note that this alternative version of the divided mind account of self-control would still be capable of avoiding Wallace's dilemma (in the way detailed in section 3.2) – and thus could still address (what I earlier argued to be) the *stronger* part of Wallace's concerns.

4. Deliberative Agency at the Pre-Judgement Stage

In section 3, I have argued that we can defend the hydraulic model against Wallace's objection that it leaves no room for genuine deliberative agency if we combine this model with the divided mind account of self-control. There is, however, a further, related objection one could raise which is as follows: even if all that was said to this point were correct, this would only show that the hydraulic model can account for the claim that agents have an active part to play *in translating their practical judgement into overt action once they have arrived at it*. However, to leave room for genuine deliberative agency, one must *also* account for the claim that agents have an active part to play *in arriving at their practical judgement*. And whether the hydraulic model can fulfil this additional requirement yet remains to be shown. As I will argue in this section, though, this further objection can be met. I propose, more specifically, that it can be addressed in a way that parallels my above reply to Wallace's objection.

In a first step, proponents of the hydraulic model should stress that the process of arriving at a practical judgement, that is, episodes of (practical) deliberation, are themselves "actional".²⁶ This point has been forcefully made by Arpaly and Schroeder (2012). As these theorists have stressed, each episode of deliberation will involve the repeated performance of a certain type of mental action that we may call "bringing to mind" actions. This term refers to the mental act of "bringing to mind – to consciousness – various ideas (general or particular, abstract or concrete) or images" (Arpaly and Schroeder, 2012, p. 211) which then provide the contents of one's deliberative process. Furthermore, a bit less obviously, episodes of deliberation may also involve the performance of control actions.²⁷ To see this, note that even before an agent has arrived at a practical judgement, control actions may be needed in order to protect her ongoing deliberative process from ubiquitous attentional distractions. Let me illustrate this thought by focusing on one type of "attentional distractor" that we have already encountered, namely impulsive desires.²⁸ Take, once again, the case of the dieter who has an active impulsive desire to eat the donut in front of her. Even before that agent has formed a practical judgement, this desire will probably try to "grab" her attention

26 For ease of exposition, I will, going forward, usually omit the specification "practical".

27 Note that although most theorists writing on self-control – including Wallace in developing his objection – have focused on exercises of self-control that occur at the "post-deliberative stage", that is, at the transition between practical judgement and overt action, some theorists have also stressed the importance of exercises of self-control that occur at the "deliberative stage", that is *during* episodes of deliberation (see, in particular, Dill and Holton, 2014, pp. 9–11).

28 There are, of course, many further types of "attentional distractors", both internal (such as, for example, spontaneously arising thoughts) and external (such as, for example, a sudden noise).

and to present its intentional object – the eating of the donut – in a favourable light. And if the agent does not resist this influence – for example, by *actively refocusing her attention* on the considerations that speak against eating the donut – she may easily (i) fail to complete her deliberative process (and impulsively eat the donut) or else (ii) arrive at the biased judgement that she has, after all, most reason to eat the donut.²⁹

However, if episodes of deliberation always involve the performance of a series of mental actions (as I have just argued), then, *prima facie*, it seems to follow that the agent also has an active part to play in arriving at her practical judgement. Thus, it appears that proponents of the hydraulic model can make room for deliberative agency at the pre-judgement stage simply by stressing the actional nature of deliberation.

Of course, within the confines of the hydraulic model, the actions performed during an episode of deliberation must always be determined by *desires* (and *these desires' respective strength*). This, however, might tempt one to raise a modified version of Wallace's objection, and to claim that if the actions performed during an episode of deliberation are themselves determined by desires, then deliberation does not amount to a genuine exertion of one's agency.

But now we can counter this objection in the same way as we countered Wallace's initial objection, namely, by rethinking the actions performed during episodes of deliberation within a divided mind framework. More specifically, we should claim that – just as (post-deliberative) control actions – the actions performed during episodes of deliberation are *determined exclusively by deliberative desires*.³⁰ Note that, given that we already presuppose a divided motivational architecture, it seems incredibly natural to extend the “job description” of deliberative desires in this manner, that is, to claim that deliberative desires *also* provide the *exclusive* motivational base for the actions that an agent performs during deliberation (i.e., both for her “bringing to mind” actions and for (what we may call) her deliberative control actions).

However, once we endorse this additional claim, we can block the potential objection that since the actions performed during episodes of deliberation are determined by desires, deliberation does not amount to a genuine exertion of agency. After all, on the extended “job description” of deliberative desires advocated in this section, deliberative desires not only promote the *translation* of an agent's practical judgement into overt action once she has arrived at such a judgement; but they also, in various ways, promote the *formation* of such a judgement.

29 Similar claims can be made for further “attentional distractors” (see n. 28).

30 I owe this suggestion for extending the divided mind account to deliberation to Chandra Sripada.

However, in view of this, regarding them as agency-undermining forces would seem even more misplaced than before.³¹

5. Conclusion

In an influential series of papers, Jay Wallace has argued that the hydraulic model of intentional action is implausible because it leaves no room for genuine deliberative agency. This is because this model claims that an agent's intentional action is determined by her desires and their respective strength – and if this is so, then, seemingly, any real agency “drops out of view”.

As Wallace furthermore argued, proponents of the hydraulic model cannot simply address his objection by adding self-control to the picture: in order to be of any help in making room for deliberative agency, exercises of self-control must themselves be conceived of as intentional actions. But in that case, the hydraulic model must say that they are determined by an agent's desires and their respective strength – and thus Wallace's initial objection seems to re-emerge.

As I have argued in this article, however, this line of objection can be addressed once we combine the hydraulic model with the divided mind account of self-control. On the divided mind account, the actions that constitute exercises of self-control are special: they are determined exclusively by a certain subset of the agent's desires – her deliberative desires. However, as I furthermore argued, the fact that an action is determined by deliberative desires does *not* undermine the claim that this action is a genuine exertion of agency. Thus, once we add the divided mind account to the picture, there are no longer any obstacles to conceiving of exercises of self-control as exercises of agency.

Moreover, as I finally argued, combining the hydraulic model with a divided mind framework not only allows us to vindicate the claim that the agent has an

31 Note that the claim defended in this section that control actions may also occur *during* deliberation and, thereby, shape an agent's practical judgement implies that control actions may also shape an agent's deliberative desires. This is so because, as mentioned earlier, deliberative desires align with an agent's practical judgement (see section 3.2); hence, in shaping an agent's practical judgement, (deliberative) control actions will shape her deliberative desires as well.

This may sound paradoxical: how can deliberative control actions shape an agent's deliberative desires if, at the same time, deliberative desires provide the exclusive motivational base for these actions? However, this seeming paradox easily dissolves. To see this, notice that the deliberative desires which provide the motivational base for deliberative control actions may well be *different* from the deliberative desires which get shaped as the result of the formation of a practical judgement. For example, one may have a general procedural deliberative desire to deliberate carefully which may lead to the occurrence of deliberative control actions, enabling one to direct one's attention properly and to arrive at an unbiased practical judgement. The practical judgement which results from this might then alter one's other, non-procedural deliberative desires (that is, deliberative desires which are directed at performing specific *overt* actions). (Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for asking me to expand on this point.)

active part to play in translating her practical judgement into overt action; but it also allows us to vindicate the claim that she has an active part to play in arriving at her practical judgement; thus enabling us to make room for deliberative agency both at the “post-judgement” and the “pre-judgement” stage.

The suggestions made in this article are, admittedly, somewhat schematic. I have not defended the divided mind approach to self-control against its “unified mind” competitors (see, for example, Kennett and Smith, 1996, 1997; Mele, 1987, 1995, 1997, 2014). Nor have I provided any detailed defence of the background assumptions that go into this approach, such as the postulate of a divide between deliberative and impulsive desires. This must be – and partly has been – done elsewhere.³²

But just like the volitionalist alternative that Wallace offers as a replacement for the hydraulic model (see Wallace, 1999a, 1999b), the suggestions made in this article are “not meant as a detailed contribution to the philosophy of action”, but rather as “a schematic framework for thinking about the kind of agency distinctive of those creatures capable of practical reason” (Wallace, 1999b, p. 637). And there is nonetheless an interesting conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing discussion: to make room for genuine deliberative agency, we need not abandon the hydraulic model. Instead, it is sufficient to combine this model with a divided mind framework.

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32 For a defence of the claim that exercises of self-control are brought about exclusively by deliberative desires, see Sripada (2014); for a defence of the divide between (what I called) deliberative and impulsive desires in particular, see also Watson (1975) and Dill and Holton (2014).

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