It is widely assumed that reasons serve both an explanatory and a justificatory purpose. In many quarters it is also taken for granted that reasons have an essential normative dimension. My presentation attempts to cut one possible path through the terminological-cum-conceptual thicket that has grown around these assumptions.

In this context I argue for the following claims:

i. The canonical trichotomy of normative, motivating and explanatory reasons (NME) and the dichotomy pro tanto vs all-in reasons with which it is connected require clarification and modification.

ii. Talk of ‘normative’ reasons ignores the difference between normative and evaluative concepts.

iii. Often, what are called ‘normative’ or ‘justifying’ reasons are simply true propositional contents.

iv. Truth is normative, yet only in a minimal non-prescriptive sense.

v. The idiom of ‘normative’ and ‘justifying’ reasons elides the difference between merely factive and good reasons and hence between error and irrationality.

vi. Factive contrast with non-factive / subjective reasons, i.e. purported facts, contrary to hard-core non-psychologism.

Time permitting, I shall also discuss what role, if any, normativity plays in avoiding the problem of deviant causal chains facing causalist accounts of reasons.

Zur Person:
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