

Tamar Schapiro, *Feeling Like It: A Theory of Inclination and Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), ISBN-13:9780198862932, 192 pp.

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Feeling like doing something is different from deciding to do it. Being inclined to act and willing to act are distinct expressions of agency. Nevertheless, they are importantly connected. In her captivating new book, *Feeling Like It*, Tamar Schapiro explores the connections between inclination and will. Her point of departure is what she calls “the moment of drama.” This is the moment when you are inclined, but not thereby determined, to do something. You are angry at your foe, and you feel like fighting back, but you haven’t made up your mind yet. There is a deliberative space between your inclination to raise your fist and strike, and your decision to do so. Schapiro invites us to think about this space and guides us through her novel conception of human agency.

On Schapiro’s view, your inclinations are the expression of your inner animal, a motivational source distinct from your deciding self. When you feel like φ ’ing, your inner animal determines itself to φ . But you are not your inner animal. Having an inclination confronts you with a choice. You can take the “high road” and assume responsibility for your action by humanizing the raw motivational material provided by your inclination into a principle of action you can endorse. Or you can take the “low road” and succumb to your inner animal, trying to flee the burden of your freedom. This theory offers much to appreciate and raises interesting questions. Here, I will concentrate on three aspects: Schapiro’s Kantian method, her concept of inclination, and her dualistic picture of motivation.

1. Schapiro distinguishes between two approaches to the philosophy of human agency. The first approach, which she calls “the standard method,” seeks to explain what happens when someone acts. This approach is quasi-scientific, Schapiro maintains, as it requires occupying the standpoint of an observer. An example of this would be trying to explain why an action occurs by identifying its cause in the agent’s psychology, such as a belief-desire pair or intention. The second approach, which Schapiro calls “the Kantian method,” seeks to answer the self-directed question “What am I doing insofar as I am acting?” This question, which invites occupying the standpoint of a participant, reflects the need for a guiding conception. A guiding conception of an activity, Schapiro explains, is a description of that activity “under which the participant chooses it and finds it worth engaging in” (21). As such, it serves as an “ideal in light of which the participant takes responsibility for doing what she is doing” (21), thereby establishing a standard for her activity, including the conditions necessary for its successful execution.

Now, Schapiro’s investigation is not about any activity in particular but about acting in general. As a result, she is led to maintain that acting *qua* acting involves operating under a guiding conception. Her central philosophical question then becomes: “What am I doing, insofar as I am engaged in, and taking responsibility for,

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doing anything at all?” (23). But why think this is a sensible question? Why think there is a “fact of the matter about what *anyone* must be taking responsibility for, insofar as undertaking to do anything at all” (25)? Schapiro elaborates on this by appealing to Kant. As she reads it, Kant’s critique does not approach its object from a scientific perspective since the latter “is itself something that Kant subjects to critique” (21). Instead, Kant aims to make explicit “the conceptions that tacitly guide us” (23) in our activities as reasoners or rational agents. Schapiro sees herself as working in this tradition. But is she justified in assuming from the get-go that any exercise of agency involves a commitment to a unique set of norms? Given the metaphysical significance of this claim, some argument would have been welcome. Similarly, I am not fully convinced that we need to construe the constitutive ideal of agency as providing a description under which anyone must find acting in general worth pursuing. I can do many things, it seems to me, without having to commit myself to the value of acting in general. Finally, I am not fully on board with Schapiro’s reading of Kant. Putting aside the fact that Kant thought of his investigation as scientific in some important sense (“from all of this there results the idea of a special science, which can be called the critique of pure reason” CPR, A11/B24), I do not think I agree with Schapiro’s “normativist” interpretation. Contrary to what Schapiro suggests, Kant is explicit in his aim to explain the real structure of our basic mental powers (“insight is at an end as soon as we have arrived at basic powers or basic faculties” CPR, 5:46). All in all, then, while I certainly find Schapiro’s “normativist” approach intriguing, I also think that her method could benefit from further defense and clarification.

2. Early on in the book, Schapiro states that her main goal is to understand how feelings fit into a good life. She then introduces the concept of inclination or motivational feeling as the central focus of this investigation. Now, while it is unclear whether she attributes intentional content to all feelings, she clearly takes inclinations to be directed toward action, like desires. In fact, inclinations are a type of desire, according to Schapiro. For, she distinguishes between a broad sense of “desire” (“placeholder desire”), which refers to any kind of motive, and a narrow sense of “desire” (“desire proper”), which refers to inclinations or feelings like it. Consider her example: Say you are “comfortably curled up on the sofa on a cold night, and you suddenly realize you have to take out the garbage” (17). If you decide to stay on the sofa because you feel like doing so, your motive is a desire proper or inclination. If, on the other hand, you take out the garbage despite not feeling like it, your motive is a desire that is not an inclination, such as a normative belief.

Although she does not put it this way, Schapiro takes inclinations to be occurrent feelings of attraction. This concept of inclination differs from the everyday one, which picks out a dispositional state. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, for example, defines “inclination” as a “tendency to a particular action,” or a “disposition of mind.” Kant as well, from which Schapiro borrows the term, uses “inclination” to refer to habitual sensible desire. Unlike Schapiro, Kant also distinguishes between desire and feeling. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he describes desire as “the faculty to be, by means of one’s representations, the cause of the objects of these representations,” and feeling as the capacity for having pleasure and displeasure (MM 6:211f; also see CPJ 20:205f). Importantly, this characterization of desire is extremely broad and does not

mention affection. Kant brings the latter into discussion only later on, when distinguishing between the different ways in which the faculty of desire can be determined. As Kant writes in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, when desire is “caused and therefore necessarily *preceded* by pleasure [it] is called *desire* in the narrow sense; habitual desire is called *inclination*” (MM: 612). As I read Kant, sensible desire (or “desire in the narrow sense”) arises when the feeling of pleasure derived from an object’s experience moves the agent to pursue it. The successful pursuit of this object, and hence the satisfaction of the efficacious representation leading to it, reinforces itself by generating additional pleasure and desire for the object. This is why sensible desire habituates itself over time, turning into inclination.

Schapiro’s framework departs from Kant’s. While Kant distinguishes between feeling and desire, sensible and non-sensible desire, and habitual and non-habitual sensible desire, Schapiro doesn’t. While Kant views inclinations as dispositional states caused by pleasure, Schapiro sees them as occurrent feelings of attraction. In reality, Schapiro’s approach aligns more closely with contemporary affect-based theorists of desire, such as Chang (2004) or Smithies & Weiss (2019).

My concern is that Schapiro’s conceptual scheme might be too sparse to capture relevant distinctions. Chang (2004), for instance, distinguishes between urges and feelings like it. Both are motivational states with a phenomenological aspect, but only the latter involve having an attitude toward some content. This distinction is significant to Chang because it implies that we are more active with respect to our feelings like it (or “affective desires”) than we are to our urges. Schapiro, by contrast, groups together urges, appetites, impulses, emotions, and various feelings under the broad category of “inclinations,” based on what she takes to be their shared volitional role. Yet I am not sure that a feeling of intellectual curiosity, for instance, plays the same volitional role as “an itch or a feeling of thirst,” hence being identical in kind with it (111). The former, it seems to me, is way less instinctive and “animalistic” than the second.

Similarly, Smithies & Weiss (2019) distinguish between basic and derivative “feelings of desire” (along with other affective experiences). While the first are possessed independently of other feelings of desire and beliefs, the latter are possessed in virtue of other feelings of desire and beliefs. Can we draw a similar distinction regarding inclinations? Take the lazy TV watcher. While he may not feel like taking out the garbage in a basic sense of “feeling like it,” he may still feel like taking out the garbage in a derivative sense. He might, for example, feel positive about making a good impression on his partner while believing that he can do so only by taking out the garbage tonight. Do derivative inclinations play the same volitional role as basic inclinations? If the “in virtue of” relation here is justificatory or reasons-involving, doesn’t this imply that we are more active with respect to our derivative inclinations than we are to our basic inclinations?

3. According to Schapiro, any adequate theory of inclination must account for three features: (i) non-voluntariness (you cannot feel like doing something at will), (ii) deliberative role (inclinations make provisional directives about what to do), and (iii) volitional pressure (it is easier to go along with your inclinations than not to). With these in view, Schapiro considers two theories of inclination, the Brute Force View

(BFV) and the Practical Thinking View (PTV), but ultimately rejects both. BFV holds that in being inclined you are relating to an external brute force, while PTV holds that in being inclined you are engaging in a form of practical thinking. However, BTV fails to account for (ii), as external forces cannot provide directives about what to do. And PTV fails to account for (i), as it turns inclinations into judgments or acts of reasoning, which Schapiro considers voluntary activities. Additionally, PTV fails to account for (iii), as it blurs the distinction between inclination and will, reducing the first to a “hasty” or “less-than-fully-committal” version of the latter.

In response to these problems, Schapiro offers her own theory, the “Inner Animal View” (IAV). In essence, IAV holds that your inclinations are the result of your inner animal’s activity. When you are inclined but not determined to φ , you are relating to a sub-personal part of you that has already determined itself to φ . While you have not made up your mind about what to do next, your inner animal is “already doing something in a consciously guided way, [...] seeing and responding to the world, moving itself through its instinctive practical thinking” (85f).

Schapiro rejects the idea that inclinations are either unthinking mental episodes or else involve “the same kind of thinking through which we determine ourselves to act” (87). She embraces, instead, motivational dualism, holding that there are two kinds of practical thinking, instinctive and deciding, along with two kinds of mind. The mind of your inner animal, on the one hand, is aware only of the external world it responds to instinctively. Your deciding mind, on the other hand, is aware of both the external world and the mind of your inner animal. This is why, in the moment of drama, “you are both inside and outside the mind of your inner animal” (89).

Recall: The moment of drama is a moment of practical indeterminacy. Although your inclinations give you directives about what to do, making it easier to go along with them than not, they do not determine your will. This is why, in the moment of drama, you are faced with a task. Even if your inner animal is already moving forward, you are not yet. To act, Schapiro argues, you need to “take the thinking that guides your inclination” into your deliberation and construct a maxim out of it, turning it into “something you can represent to yourself as an object worthy of your human choice” (135, 148).

According to Schapiro, when you are inclined to act, your inner animal is in motion. For instance, when you are thirsty, your inner animal is “initiating the activity of drinking” (117). And when you feel like fighting back, “your attention is being focused “insistently” on your foe, your heart rate is increasing, your breathing is growing shallow, and your muscles are tightening” (102f). Now, I am not sure if we’re supposed to take literally Schapiro’s claim that when you are thirsty your inner animal is starting to drink. But more importantly, I am not sure I understand how Schapiro distinguishes between instinctive practical thinking, instinctive activity, and the effects of instinctive activity on your body. Consider the increased heart rate associated with your inclination to fight back. It is evidently not a case of practical thinking since it is not even a mental event. So, it is either a part of your inner animal’s activity (as a manifestation of your instinctive capacities) or a physiological event sparked by, or

linked with, your inner animal's activity. For Schapiro, the former is the case, but she has not offered any argument to support this claim.

Additionally, Schapiro defends what appears to be an incompatible pair of statements: (i) your instinctive thinking is fundamentally different from your deliberative thinking, and (ii) to act, you must to take your inner animal's thought into your deliberation. This apparent incompatibility is further exacerbated by Schapiro's insistence that, as a deliberative being, you cannot think your inner animal's thoughts. She is well aware of this problem. As she puts it, "if there is a mismatch between the form of thought in which your inner animal is engaged, and the form of thought you engage in when you deliberate, then how can the former provide content for the latter to deliberate about" (103)? Her solution is rather surprising: To take your inner animal's thought into your deliberation, you do not need to think it at all, as deliberation is not double-checking. When considering whether to act in response to your inclination, you are not merely verifying the cogency of your inner animal's thought. For, a deciding mind is not just an instinctive mind capable of double-checking itself, according to Schapiro. Instead, she argues that deliberation is incorporation, a process of transforming your inner animal's thought into a maxim of action by humanizing it, by giving it a form suitable for human choice.

Is this rejection of the thinkability requirement justified? While I agree with Schapiro that if deliberation involves double-checking, then it also requires thinkability of your inner animal's thought, I am not convinced that thinkability is necessary only in this case. At least, Schapiro has not established this connection. Her main argument is that (i) deliberation is incorporation; (ii) incorporation does not require thinkability; so, (iii) deliberation does not require thinkability either. However, one may question this argument. Setting aside the first premise, is it true that incorporation does not require thinkability? Schapiro emphasizes the transformational character of incorporation, but I am not convinced this necessarily rules out thinkability. Even if incorporation involves humanizing your inner animal's thought, making it your own, transforming it into something you can act on, thinkability might still be necessary. For instance, to incorporate my proposal or advice into your deliberation, you need to comprehend it first. How can you transform my proposal into a maxim, into something worthy of your choice, if you cannot grasp its meaning? This raises the question: Is incorporation different when it involves proposals made by your inner animal? A more detailed exploration of the actual process of incorporation, along with an explanation as to why it does not require thinkability, could prove salutary here.

In this review, my focus has been on the main argumentative moves of Schapiro's theory of inclination and will. Unfortunately, this has led me to overlook other equally interesting points. For example, Schapiro's engagement with historical figures and contemporary philosophers is rich and enlightening, as she gracefully navigates between Plato and Korsgaard, Kant and Scanlon, or Augustine and Quinn. Similarly, her discussion of freedom and responsibility, weakness of the will, and social pressure is full of valuable insights. Lastly, Schapiro's prose is elegant and witty, and her examples vivid, making the reading experience truly enjoyable. I can only hope that more books will be written with such attention to detail.

Not only does Schapiro succeed in advancing a novel and exciting theory of human motivation, but she also brings to light significant underlying patterns in contemporary philosophy of agency. While I have emphasized the more controversial aspects of Schapiro's investigation, I am certain that her critique of motivational monism will have a lasting impact, and her Inner Animal View will emerge as one of the main contenders in the field.

Abbreviations of Kant's works:

CPR: Critique of Pure Reason

CPrR: Critique of Practical Reason

CPJ: Critique of the Power of Judgment

MM: Metaphysics of Morals

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