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# Actions, Normative Reasons, and Causes

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## Résumé

My title is obviously a play on Davidson's "Actions, Reasons, and Causes" (1963), but my topic is importantly different. Davidson's concern in his paper was with *motivating* reasons, which he took to be appropriately related combinations of pro-attitude and belief, and his goal was to argue that they play a leading part in causal explanations of intentional actions. My concern in this paper is with *normative* reasons, which I take to be facts counting in favour of attitudes or actions, but my goal is to argue that they too take the lead in causal explanations of (some) normative beliefs and thereby of (some) actions. Davidson eventually argued for a view of this general sort himself in "The Objectivity of Value" (1995). But that late paper does not make the case for such views as clearly or as convincingly as I think it can be made. This paper is thus written in the hope of pushing the argument over the goal-line. Part of the case for Davidson's *anomalous metanormative naturalism*, as I call it, lies in worries about alternative forms of metanormative realism, whether forms of naturalism or forms of non-naturalism, which deny that normative properties could be causal properties. Sections 1 and 2 of the paper will therefore discuss some of the challenges they confront as a result of this, section 1 focusing on contemporary versions of non-naturalism, section 2 focusing on neo-Aristotelian versions of naturalism. Section 3 of the paper then explains how Davidson's anomalous naturalism purports to overcome these challenges, while section 4 considers how Davidson's position might fare against the very different sorts of objections it is bound to attract in its turn. Although a rigorous comparison of these contending forms of metanormative realism will not be possible here, my contention will be that anomalous naturalism is the most promising of them and that it is promising enough to vindicate realism over anti-realism.

**Mots-Clés:** normative reasons, normative properties, action, causation, naturalism, realism, Donald Davidson, Philippa Foot, Thomas Scanlon

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