

Smith's Incoherence Argument for Moral Rationalism

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Abstract — Defenders of Motivational judgment internalism (MJI) argue that in one sense or another, our moral judgments necessarily motivate us to some extent. One of the most prominent defenders is Michael Smith, who in his highly influential book *The Moral Problem* defends a form of moral rationalism, which is the view that moral reasoning is based on practical reasoning, and thus that moral facts can and are determined *a priori*. This form of rationalism Smith claims to entail his account about internalism.

One of the main merits of Smith's account of moral motivation is that it allows for individual difference in levels of moral motivation, by making the claim that moral judgments necessarily motivate defeasible. Before elaborating on how Smith does so, I shall first discuss Smith's approach in *The Moral Problem*, which will also help to set out the basic assumptions that will be taken for granted within this essay. I will then look at the account that he provides, and assess it with respect to one of Russ Shafer-Landau's criticisms thereof. Shafer-Landau rather helpfully puts Smith's case for his moral rationalism in the form of what he calls 'the incoherence argument'. The strongest problem that Shafer-Landau has with this argument seems to be with the following claim: 'it is irrational for an individual to not desire what his fully rational self would desire'. What I hope to conclude is as follows: Although Smith's account of internalism can for the most part withstand this objection that Shafer-Landau makes to it, even though Smith himself does not demonstrate any incoherence in failing to desire what one's fully rational self would desire, in that a different kind of incoherence can be defended through other means. This would however result in a requirement for Smith to make significant concessions to his project in *The Moral Problem*.

Keywords — Moral; Rationalism; Motivation; Internalism

I. INTRODUCTION: THE INTERNALISM/EXTERNALISM DEBATE SURROUNDING MORAL MOTIVATION

There is a great deal of controversy on the question of what kind of connection there is between moral judgments and moral motivation. Putting the exact details of the views aside, they are all thought to fit within two main sets of views, motivational internalism and externalism. Motivational internalists claim that judging an action to be morally right or wrong will intrinsically motivate one (to some extent) to perform or avoid that action, even if one doesn't manage to perform or avoid that action as a result. Ordinarily and vaguely, motivational externalism is simply construed as

accepting the negation of this view, which as Nick Zangwill puts effectively, amounts to the following claims: "When moral judgements motivate us, they do not do so alone. They motivate us only in conjunction with distinct non-cognitive states, typically desires" [1: 97].

One of the most prominent defenders of motivational internalism is Michael Smith [2], who in his highly influential book *The Moral Problem* defends a form of moral rationalism, which is the view that moral reasoning is based on practical reasoning, and thus that moral facts can and are determined *a priori*. This form of rationalism Smith claims to entail his account of motivational internalism.

Amongst the main subjects of argument in this debate is the possibility of a 'principled amoralists'. Philosophers like David Brink [3] argue that it is possible for an individual to have a sense of moral obligations in the form of moral judgements and yet have no motivation to act morally, and from this possibility it must follow that having moral judgments can't be sufficient for moral motivation. Russ Shafer-Landau also uses this line of argument to support externalism.

Aside from the arguments that try to argue for a disconnection between moral judgments and moral motivation in favour of externalism, there is a serious issue with numerous explanations of internalism, in that these explanations do not take sufficiently into account the differences between individuals, because moral motivation is being treated as having to work in the same way for everybody. This can be seen more clearly when looking at how Shafer-Landau describes internalism:

"Motivational judgment internalism (MJI) claims that necessarily, a person judging an action right is motivated to some extent to comply with her judgment." [4: 267-268]

Since defenders of this claim have to explain the necessary connection between moral judgment and motivation in every person, the explanation is that the motivation comes from the judgment itself. Although not entailed specifically, this claim might be taken to assume that the resultant motivation from the moral judgment of every person is to the same extent. This seems to be how other weaker versions of internalism treat the motivational force of moral judgments as well. So if, for instance, a numerical value of strength could be ascribed to motivations, such claims seem to say that the same

moral judgment would result in a motivation of exactly the same value for every moral agent (call it value 'x').

McDowell [5] has made the best effort to rectify this, by utilising Aristotle's distinctions between enkratic agents and akratic agents. If an enkratic agent really believes that some course of action is morally required, then (i) that recognition will motivate him/her to perform that action, and (ii) there will be no possibility of any competing motivation, since any competing motivation will be 'silenced' by the recognition of the moral requirement. For akratic agents, other factors external to the moral judgment can produce competing motivations that prevent the agent from performing the relevant moral action. However, even this dichotomy does not give a sufficient explanation as to why individuals vary in their levels of moral motivation.

Smith allows for individual difference in levels of moral motivation, by rejecting MJI in its stated form, and making the claim behind it defeasible. Before elaborating on how Smith does so, I shall first discuss Smith's approach in *The Moral Problem*, which will also help to set out the basic assumptions that will be taken for granted within this essay. I will then look at the account that he provides, and assess it with respect to Russ Shafer-Landau's criticisms thereof. What I hope to conclude is as follows: Although Smith's account of internalism can for the most part withstand this objection that Shafer-Landau makes to it, even though Smith himself does not demonstrate any incoherence in failing to desire what one's fully rational self would desire, in that a different kind of incoherence can be defended through other means. This would however result in a requirement for Smith to make significant concessions to his project in *The Moral Problem*.

II. SMITH, SHAFER-LANDAU, AND THE MORAL PROBLEM

In an attempt to explain where moral judgments come from, and how they motivate actions, Michael Smith formulated the following 3 propositions in chapter one of his book *The Moral Problem*:

1) "Moral judgments of the form 'It is right that I ϕ ' express a subject's belief about an objective matter of fact, a fact about what it is right for her to do" [2: 12].

Smith describes calls this view in the first chapter of *The Moral Problem* 'The objectivity of moral judgment'. In essence, the first proposition summarises the cognitivist view, that being the view that when one makes a moral judgment, that judgment has the form of a belief that can be correct or incorrect.

Cognitivism does not necessarily entail a realist view on morality (the view that moral judgments can be correct on the basis of moral facts). On the contrary, it is possible for a cognitivist to hold the view that moral judgments presuppose an objective morality, and that this presupposition is in fact a systematic error, and as such moral discussion should either be eliminated entirely (this view is known as moral eliminativism), or else that moral judgments can be kept on the basis that they play an important function in society (this is known as moral fictionalism). In the context of this essay,

cognitivism is going to be taken as a base assumption, for otherwise the question of how (if at all) moral judgments can intrinsically motivate would be mostly rendered redundant, as most non-cognitivists tend to claim that moral judgments express moral attitudes (such as admiration or disgust) rather than beliefs, and the possibility of intrinsically motivating attitudes is far less contentious than intrinsically motivating beliefs.

The second proposition is Smith's formulation of motivational internalism, and is therefore the one of the three that I will be focussing on:

2) "If someone judges that it is right that she ϕ s then, *ceteris paribus*, she is motivated to ϕ " [2: 12].

To elaborate, this proposition holds that moral judgments reflect opinions about why we should behave in certain ways, and that these reasons provide intrinsic motivation to conduct moral actions. This motivation does not necessarily have to be overriding (i.e., having these moral motivations does not ensure that one acts in correspondence with them), but it stands nonetheless with every held moral belief.

This proposition is described by Smith as 'the practicality of moral judgment', in that it explains how having moral beliefs can make you act on them, which is a requirement the internalist view, as it holds that motivations to act morally come simply from moral beliefs, and as such, there are no necessary conditions other than moral beliefs for moral motivation.

Further into the book, Smith's particular version of internalism could be stated as follows:

"If someone judges that it is right that she ϕ s then, in so far as she is rational, she is motivated to ϕ " [2: 61]. (This is what Smith refers to as 'the Practicality Requirement')

Although he describes Smith's position as an internalist one, according to Shafer-Landau [4: 275], "externalists claim that the connection between a moral judgment and being motivated is a contingent one. Specifically, it is contingent on a person's psychological make-up and on the perceived content of moral demands".

Not only does it seem like both Smith's original definition of internalism is consistent with such claims, but so is even his 'Practicality Requirement'. For arguably, the extent to which one is rational is a facet of one's psychological make-up, and can determine how the content of moral demands is perceived. In this sense, one can take the connection between one's moral judgments and one's moral motivations to be contingent. On the other hand, there is a conceptual connection; only it is between moral judgments and the subsequent motivations that are believed would be present if one were a fully rational being.

As noted in the previous section, Shafer-Landau has a stronger definition of internalism, in that he sees it requiring a necessary connection between moral judgments and motivation. Although the practicality requirement can be read that way, in so far as no person making moral judgments might be taken to be wholly irrational, and therefore all moral judgments necessarily motivate to at least some extent, it still seems like Smith doesn't make a straightforward commitment

to the connection being necessary. Since Shafer-Landau himself accepts the possibility of intrinsically motivating beliefs, this is how he draws the line between internalism and externalism, and why he defends externalism.

Unlike with Shafer-Landau's approach, the importance of the whole debate seems to not only come from trying to establish what if anything distinguishes normative judgments from any other kind, but also more importantly, whether one's culpability for not acting morally can be grounded purely in some form of failure to understand or appreciate one's moral obligations. If moral judgments can intrinsically motivate, the claim that such judgments ought to be treated as unlike other kinds of judgments is more defensible than otherwise.

At any rate, the final proposition of 'The Moral Problem' is as follows:

3) "An agent is motivated to act in a certain way just in case she has an appropriate desire and a means-end belief, where belief and desire are, in Hume's terms, distinct existences" [2: 12].

This originates from the Humean Theory of Psychology, namely, that beliefs are fundamentally distinct from desires. Desires are views of how the world should be, whereas beliefs are views of how the world actually is. Hume had at least been thought to assert that the two as distinct entities are necessary and sufficient for an agent to be motivated, so long as the two are relevant to one another. In short, the two need to stand independent of one another, but together they constitute motivation.

'The Moral Problem' itself is that all three propositions cannot be correct simultaneously, for the reason that if moral judgments express an agent's belief, then there is an inconsistency between proposing that these judgments entail motivation in their own right, and the proposition that beliefs alone cannot motivate. Therefore, in order for a meta-ethical theory to stand without inconsistency, it would have to reject at least one of the three propositions, or else demonstrate how they can all be reconciled (which Smith rather ambitiously attempts to do).

In a paper called 'Moral Judgment and Normative Reasons', Shafer-Landau formulates a number of objections to Smith's account of internalism in particular. Apart from being potentially very damaging to Smith, Shafer-Landau's objections to his account of internalism are worth looking at because he in fact rejects the Humean theory of psychology, despite defending motivational externalism. Since Smith also attempts to reconcile his account of internalism with the Humean theory of psychology, both of their views give a clear indication of how the internalism/externalism debate concerning moral motivation can be entirely separated from discussions on the Humean theory of psychology. Ordinarily, it is thought that internalism in combination with cognitivism requires a rejection of the Humean theory, and therefore externalism is usually associated with the acceptance of the Humean theory. However, as both Shafer-Landau and Smith demonstrate, accepting or rejecting the Humean theory doesn't restrict oneself to a particular position on this debate.

III. SMITH'S RATIONALIST APPROACH AND SHAFER-LANDAU'S INTERPRETATION THEREOF

As I already mentioned, Smith does not accept MJI, and thus doesn't think that any agent making a moral judgment must be motivated to some extent to act in accordance with it. He does however argue that that is a defeasible conceptual connection, dependent upon the individual's level of practical rationality. Moreover, Smith claims that there is a necessary connection between moral judgments and normative reasons for actions.

To put it briefly however, there are two tenets to Smith's internalism, which are as follows:

1) Smith's account of normative reasons (which I will refer to as his rationalism)

"If it is right for agents to ϕ in circumstances C, then there is a reason for those agents to ϕ in C" [2: 63].

Which Smith claims entails:

2) The Practicality Requirement

"If an agent judges that it is right for her to ϕ in circumstances C, then either she is motivated to ϕ in C or she is practically irrational" [2: 63].

As I have already noted, Shafer-Landau takes internalism to be the view that all moral judgments necessarily bring about subsequent motivation to some extent. He therefore describes Smith as a "hybrid-judgment internalist" [4: 289] or 'HJI', which he claims commits him to the view that "a person sincerely judging an action right has reason to be motivated to perform that action" [4: 268]. He also says that the kind of HJI that Smith advocates is a strong reading of this view, since this person doesn't simply have a reason to be motivated, but in fact the best possible reason to be motivated [4: 268].

This 'hybrid' view is taken by Shafer-Landau to be a mixture of MJI and 'Reasons Judgment Internalism' (RJI), which is the view that sincere moral judgments intrinsically give agents reasons for action. One can see why Shafer-Landau treats Smith's motivational internalism in this way; Smith still holds a necessary connection, only rather it being between the ordinary moral judgments that we make and the subsequent motivations that follow therefrom, it is between the moral judgment and what we believe to be the motivations of a fully rational version of ourselves.

However Shafer-Landau argues that not only is Smith's rationalism in tension with the practicality requirement, but also that Smith's rationalism is "intrinsically problematic" [6: 33]. I shall now look into how Shafer-Landau justifies this claim.

IV. THE INCOHERENCE ARGUMENT

First, Shafer-Landau sets out the incoherence argument in the following straightforward manner (the references within the quotation were made by Shafer-Landau, but I have formatted to fit within this paper):

"(1) If S believes that an action is right, then S believes that S has a normative reason to do it. (Conceptual truth)

(2) S has a normative reason to do x in C if and only if, and because, S's fully rational counterpart (i.e., S if possessed of all true beliefs, no false ones, and a maximally coherent set of desires... [2: 158-61]...) would advise S to do x in C.

(3) Therefore if S believes that x is right, then S believes that S's fully rational self would advise S to do x.

(4) Failing to desire to do x, while believing that one's ideal self would advise one to do x, is a form of incoherence that signals practical irrationality ([2: 177] and [7: 162-63]).

(5) Therefore either one is motivated to do what one judges right, or one is practically irrational" [6: 34-35].

Since believing a course of action to be right is to believe that one's fully rational self would advise oneself to take that course of action, to fail to be motivated to take a course of action that one's fully rational self would be motivated to take is a kind of practical irrationality. So even if one is wrong about what one's fully rational self would do, failing to be motivated by this wrong judgment, despite it meaning that fortunately one actually ends up taking up the right course of action, would nevertheless be at odds with one's belief about what one's rational self would do, and would therefore be irrational. So despite what Shafer-Landau claims, there is no tension between Smith's account of normative reasons and the practicality requirement (despite Shafer-Landau suggesting otherwise), since all it says is that they are either motivated or not entirely rational. Holding an incorrect moral judgment, and failing to be motivated by it, is still irrational, even if one ought not to be motivated.

After introducing the incoherence argument, Shafer-Landau highlights three problems with the argument: according to him at least, the first problem is that the argument is invalid, the second problem is the lack of support for premise (4) and the third problem is that premise (2) is false. Although he does not take all of these problems to be insurmountable for Smith, he does still think that all need to be addressed, and that they together at the very least repudiate the argument.

For the purposes of this paper, I will only be focussing on the second problem that Shafer-Landau raises. This is because I think that it is not only the strongest objection to the argument, and the only one that Smith [8] responds to inadequately, but it also reflects some problems with Smith's project in *The Moral Problem* which he hasn't adequately addressed either.

V. THE UNDERMINING OF SUPPORT FOR PREMISE (4)

Despite accepting some more contentious points in his other objections, Shafer-Landau [6: 35] argues quite strongly for his doubts about premise (4) of the incoherence argument. First of all, he argues that failing to desire to do what you think your ideal self would do isn't a contradiction. He then proceeds to deny any failure of instrumental rationality in this scenario; according to Shafer-Landau, an agent without a desire to undertake an action that he/ she believes to be what his/her fully rational self would desire to undertake wouldn't

necessarily be in conflict with any previously held desire of greater strength.

He then refers to cases of being mistaken about what your rational self would advise as possible instances where it is not irrational to lack a desire to do what one's fully rational self would desire to do. The only failure of rationality that Shafer-Landau concedes to is the failure to "adhere to the standards of rationality that you yourself endorse". He argues that this isn't necessarily irrational however, since one's standards could in fact be incorrect, in so far as one might have incorrect beliefs about what fully rational agents would advise.

Further in the paper Shafer-Landau claims [6: 36-37] that there is a weak and strong form of irrationality: acting contrary to a reason is the weak form, and acting contrary to the best reasons is the strong form. He argues that although Smith demonstrates that there is weak irrationality in failing to align our motivations and moral beliefs, he does not demonstrate any strong irrationality.

Smith [8: 259-261] responds to this doubt about there being any failure of rationality when having false beliefs by making a comparison of rationality between the following pairs of psychological states:

- a) A belief that one's fully rational self would desire to do x in C, and the desire to do x in C.
- b) A belief that one's fully rational self would desire to do x in C, and indifference about whether to do x in C.
- c) A belief that one's fully rational self would desire to do x in C, and an aversion to doing x in C.

Putting the question of whether the beliefs are true or false aside, since pair a) coheres in a way that b) and c) do not, Smith argues that there must be irrationality in holding either b) or c). To justify this further, he [8: 260] uses an analogous comparison of beliefs:

- a*) The belief that p, the belief that the minimally extended but maximally coherent belief set that comprises p also comprises q, and the belief that q.
- b*) The belief that p, the belief that the minimally extended but maximally coherent belief set that comprises p also comprises q, and the lack of belief about q.
- c*) The belief that p, the belief that the minimally extended but maximally coherent belief set that comprises p also comprises q, and the belief that \sim q.

What Smith intends to make clear is that because a*) is more coherent than b*) or c*), meaning that accepting b*) or c*) would be a failure of rationality, then by analogy, a) must be more coherent than b) or c), meaning that accepting b) or c) would be a failure of rationality.

There are as far as I can tell two possible problems that can be raised for Smith's response here: the first is the move from accepting b) and c) are less cohesive than a) to concluding that accepting b) or c) would be irrational, and the second would be the analogy itself.

Even if it is accepted that a) is more coherent than b) or c), that doesn't in itself show that b) and c) are in themselves

inconsistent. In other words, even if an agent is shown to be lacking in practical rationality (in so far as an agent could be more practically rational), does that demonstrate that the agent is practically *irrational*? Although Smith would probably say yes, it may be more reasonable to say no.

If for instance, I was to believe that if I were fully rational, I would go to bed earlier in the evenings, but still lack the desire to go to bed earlier in the evenings, would I be practically irrational? The fact that I could be more practically rational by desiring to go to bed earlier (to any extent) doesn't seem to imply that I am instantiating some kind of incoherence in having this pair of psychological states.

As for the analogy between a) -c) and a*) -c*), Shafer-Landau could argue that the analogy does not exist at all. If systems of desire work in an entirely different way to belief systems, then there would be no need to think that any incoherence regarding b*) or c*) reflects in any way on b) or c). One could argue for this by claiming that beliefs are subject to deliberations, whilst desires are not. Beliefs are thought to be subject to choice, even if they are not always formed out of choice, desires do not share this quality. Even if one accepted in some instances the magnitude or object of desires can be subject to our deliberations, it could not be argued that this is the case for all desires in every situation. For it is relatively uncontroversial to claim that there are desires that can appear entirely out of the blue, which one is entirely unable to make disappear, leaving only the choice of either ignoring or acting in accordance with the desire.

What Smith is trying to defend here is a contradiction in failing to desire what you believe your fully rational self would desire, unless there is some admission of irrationality along the line, in so far as you are stating that you are not your fully rational self. If you're wrong about your fully rational self, you have failed to reason correctly, so perhaps some kind of irrationality is present in any case. Still, what Smith seems to really need to show though is why certain desires have sufficient relevance to one's rationality.

VI. A POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY

There is a strategy that Smith doesn't suggest, but might actually be more helpful to his cause, which is to substitute any mention of 'desire' in the incoherence argument with 'motivation'; this would allow for the possibility of being motivated without having a relevant desire.

The adjusted argument (in which I have also included changes that Smith [8] suggests in order to address Shafer-Landau's other objections) would be as follows:

(1**) If S believes that an action is right *pro tanto*, then S believes that S has a *pro tanto* normative reason to do it.

(2**) S has a normative reason to do x in C if and only if, and because, S's fully rational counterpart (i.e. S if possessed of all true beliefs, no false ones, and a maximally coherent set of motivations) would be motivated to do x in C.

(3**) Therefore if S believes that doing x in C is right then S believes that S's fully rational self would be motivated to do x in C.

(4**) Failing to be motivated to do x in C, while believing that one's ideal self would be motivated to do x in C, is a form of incoherence that signals practical irrationality.

It is the discussion of desire as being connected to rationality that seems to be what Shafer-Landau is at odds with. One of the main advantages to using this alternative would be that the structure of the argument remains intact, but it addresses concerns that Shafer-Landau raises (as well as perhaps those raised by others), which Smith can't seem to adequately respond to.

The incoherence behind premise (4) also becomes more visible: If you're not doing what you think your fully rational self would be motivated to do, then you must accept that there is something other than rationality guiding your behaviour (simply human error can count when you are purely governed by attempts to be rational). There are also other incentives for accepting these further adjustments to the incoherence argument.

In the paper, 'On the Rationality of Desiring the Forbidden', Eric Wiland has his own argument for why the practicality requirement is false, which is based on the following counterexample:

"A married couple is hoping to reignite their drab sex life. They seek out a good advisor, believing, as Smith does, that they have all-things-considered reason to do what an ideal advisor most wants them to do. So they go to an expert marital therapist, who cleverly advises them to go home and engage only in mild foreplay for the first week. In fact, the therapist forbids them from taking things any further; otherwise, she explains, the course of therapy won't work. The fact that sex is forbidden, however, makes it exciting once again. The couple, believing that they ought not to have sex this first week, try to follow their advisor's advice, but give in to their newfound desire to have sex. It turns out that they now have no desire to stop at foreplay. Next week, they let their adviser that they did not stick to her advice. She nods knowingly, smiles, and collects her fee." [9: 297]

As Wiland notes (Ibid. p, 298) in this scenario, the couple's reasons for their beliefs about what their reasons for action are do not correspond with their reasons for their desires. They believe they have reason to stop at foreplay for the first week, but fail to desire to stop (as the marital therapist 'intended'), but then they believe what they have reason to believe (given the therapist's instructions), and they don't fail to desire what they have reason to desire (as their desire to have sex is part of the therapist's plan). In this sense, they are behaving rationally, but on the one hand, they are practically irrational, since they do not satisfy the practicality requirement.

Not only does the practicality requirement fail to account for the rationality of the marital couple's actions, but would also have our agent have an incompatible pair of practical belief and desire rather than believing what he/she has reason

to believe, and desiring what he/she has reason to desire, as it would mean having a desire that does not fit with his/her practical beliefs [9: 298].

There is a possible response that Wiland didn't anticipate in his paper is in fact very similar to the one that Smith [8] provided for Shafer-Landau. Wiland's argument rests on the claim that they have an 'all things considered' reason to reason to do what the therapist advises. This claim comes from premise (2) of the incoherence argument, which was replaced by Smith with one stating that one's fully rational self would *desire* to do x in C, not necessarily advise it, if S had normative reason to do x in C. They only therefore have *pro tanto* reason to desire whatever their fully rational selves would *pro tanto* desire. So rather than having reason to desire what the therapist instructs them to desire, they would have reason to desire what they believe the therapist would desire them to *pro tanto*. This can be overridden, so as long as they did have some desire to follow the therapist's instructions (which one would think is rather plausible, since they went to see the therapist on their own accord).

However, what Wiland's argument does show is that cases where what is the desirable course of action and what is the right course of action are disconnected can be problematic for the practicality requirement itself. Although Smith [8] did manage to give a response to the attack of premise 4, the line of argument that he takes in both responses is unlikely to satisfy those like Shafer-Landau or Wiland. The analogy with a*)-c*) does not seem to be enough to convincingly establish that failing to desire what one believes one's fully rational self would do is incoherent in any significant way. Moreover, as Wiland showed in the previous section, indirection cases can be problematic for the practicality requirement, in so far as it can at the very least require an agent to have an incompatible practical belief and desire in order to be less irrational. For this reason I think my adjustment to the incoherence argument might be preferable.

The biggest problem that Smith would have with my adjustment to his argument though is the consequences that it has for his project in *The Moral Problem* – that being to reconcile cognitivist motivational internalism with the Humean theory of psychology (or in Smith's words, the acceptance of the following claim: "An agent is motivated to act in a certain way just in case she has an appropriate desire and a means-end belief, where belief and desire are, in Hume's terms, distinct existences." [2: 12]). Although my response would not necessarily entail a rejection of the Humean outlook here, it would nevertheless make it much harder to combine with internalism, since according to this outlook to fail to be motivated is to lack the appropriate desire. This perhaps indicates the heart of the problem that Shafer-Landau raises – if one tries to incorporate a Humean outlook into an account of moral rationalism, then one must accept that the possession of certain desires can be required in order to be rational, and such requirements are neither immediately intuitive nor sufficiently demonstrated by Smith.

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VII. CONCLUSION

I take this essay to have shown the following: Of the three objections made against the incoherence argument, there was at least one where Smith's response could be arguably taken to be lacking. Smith struggles to explain convincingly how it is irrational for one to fail to desire what one believes to be what one would desire if one were fully rational. Although there may be a comparatively greater coherence in having said desire than not, Smith still doesn't seem to grasp that this pair of psychological states when contemplated independently doesn't seem to be incoherent. In light of this difficulty, Smith leaves premise (4) under threat.

What I suggest is the difficulty with the incoherence argument is Smith's focus on the beliefs about one desires, as well as the beliefs of what one would desire if one were fully rational. If instead, the focus were simply on beliefs about motivations, and the motivations of one's fully rational selves, then the incoherence argument could still function on a *pro tanto* basis that Smith intended. In moving closer towards more tradition accounts of motivational internalism (such as those of John McDowell [5] and Thomas Nagel [10]), whilst keeping the defeasibility of the central internalist claim, one can get a stronger incoherence (that being to judge an action to be right and failing to be motivated to perform said action), in order to support the practicality requirement. Another advantage to his approach is that it also means that the possibility of indirection cases can also be rejected. This may result in the rejection of the Humean Theory of Motivation for Smith, but it may be what his account needs in order to remain plausible.

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