An Adam Smithian Account of Moral Reasons

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<u>Abstract</u>: The Humean Theory of Reasons, according to which all of our reasons for action are explained by our desires, has been criticized for not being able to account for "moral reasons," namely, overriding reasons to act on moral demands regardless of one's desires. My aim in this paper is to utilize ideas from Adam Smith's moral philosophy in order to offer a novel and alternative account of moral reasons that is both desire-based and accommodating of an adequate version of the requirement that moral demands have overriding reason-giving force. In particular, I argue that the standpoint of what Smith calls "the impartial spectator" can both determine what is morally appropriate and inappropriate and provide the basis for normative reasons for action—including reasons to act on moral demands—to nearly all reason-responsive agents and, furthermore, that these reasons have the correct weight. The upshot of the proposed account is that it offers an interesting middle road out of a dilemma pertaining to the explanatory and normative dimensions of reasons for informed-desire Humean theorists.

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1. Introduction

Mary desires to see an action movie, and Rambo is currently playing at the cinema right across the street from her apartment. It seems natural to say that Mary has a *reason*, though perhaps not an overriding one, to go see the Rambo movie. But then the following thought might occur: what if *all* reasons were to be explained in this manner—that is, via agents' motivations and, more specifically, via their desires—so that agents would have a reason to perform a certain action only if it furthers one or more of their desires? This simple thought has been championed by what has become known as *The Humean Theory of Reasons*. The classical argument for the theory has two premises. First, it assumes reasons/motives internalism: if *p* is a reason for A to ϕ (some action verb), then *p* must be able to motivate A to ϕ.[1] Second, it assumes the *Humean Theory of Motivation*: the ability to be motivated to ϕ requires a desire that would be furthered by ϕ-ing. Putting these two premises together, we get that *p* is a reason for A to ϕ only if A has a desire that would be furthered by ϕ-ing.[2] This picture of practical reasons is attractive for both theoretical and metaphysical reasons. In particular, the Humean Theory of Reasons is theoretically simple as it explains intentional action via an agent's practical reasons, which are explained, in turn, via the agent's psychology. Furthermore, while the Humean theory neither entails nor is entailed by any specific meta-ethical view, it is congruent with our contemporary metaphysical understanding of the world, namely, the naturalistic understanding of the world.

However, a worry might arise. Consider that on her way to see the movie, Mary witnesses an incident in which John has been hit by a car. Mary has no desire to help John but simply

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[1] Darwall (1997, pp. 307–310) has referred to the relevant subcategory of reasons/motives internalism as "(Metaphysical) Existence Internalism."

[2] See Schroeder (2007, pp. 7) for a presentation of this argument. More generally, the manner in which I present the Humean Theory of Reasons and its shortcomings in this introduction owes much to Mark Schroeder's widely-discussed book *Slaves of the Passions*.

desires to make it to the movie on time. One might be tempted to say that Mary has a reason to help John regardless of what she happens to desire. The problem here is that since the Humean theory postulates that *only* desires give rise to reasons, agents will have too few reasons, and so the theory is not adequate. In particular, since any reason that does not further one's desires is ruled out, the Humean Theory of Reasons cannot account for "moral reasons," namely, overriding reasons to act on moral demands regardless of one's desires. The worry is three-fold:

1. *Desire-Dependence*: The Humean theory cannot account for the existence of normative reasons that all agents have regardless of the desires they happen to have.

2. *Incorrect Weighting*: The Humean theory ties the weight of reasons to the strength of desires and cannot account for the fact that moral reasons are the weightiest reasons.

3. *Morality/Reasons Externalism*: According to the Humean theory, it is not the case that if A morally ought to ϕ, then necessarily there is a reason for A to ϕ.[3]

My aim in this paper is to utilize ideas from Adam Smith's moral philosophy in order to offer a novel and alternative account of moral reasons that is both desire-based and accommodating of an adequate version of the requirement that moral demands have overriding reason-giving force.[4] In particular, I will argue that the standpoint of what Smith calls "the impartial spectator" can both determine what is morally appropriate and inappropriate and provide the basis for normative reasons for action—including reasons to act on moral demands— to nearly all reason-responsive agents and, furthermore, that these reasons have the correct weight. I proceed as follows. I first bring out a dilemma that arises for informed-desire Humean theorists, concerning the explanatory and normative dimensions of reasons, and offer a framework for a middle road out of this dilemma (Section 2). I then present Smith's account of the impartial spectator as well as its intricate motivational structure (Section 3), develop an

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[3] See Darwall (1997, pp. 306–307) for a discussion of morality/reasons internalism.

[4] I will be conceding that all reasons, including reasons to act on moral demands, are desire-dependent. In other words, there are no reasons that an agent A has regardless of his desires.

Adam Smithian picture of normative reasons, and explain how this picture accounts for the reason-giving force of moral demands (Section 4). I conclude by replying to potential objections (Section 5) and by explaining how my account gets us out of the aforementioned dilemma in the way described in Section 2 (Section 6).

2. A Dilemma for the Humean and an Aristotelian Way Out

The conclusion of the classical argument for the Humean Theory of Reasons states that p is a reason for A to ϕ only if A has a desire that would be furthered by ϕ-ing. Many Humean theorists, however, have sought to tighten this conclusion by adding further constraints on p counting as a reason for A, so that it is clear that it is not the case that any idiosyncratic whim can give rise to a reason for action.[5] This clarification has to do with the *normative* dimension of practical reasons: we want such reasons not only to explain our actions but also to *justify* them. Thus, when Bernard Williams (1981a) first discussed the Humean Theory of Reasons, he argued that the classical argument provides at most a "sub-Humean model." In order to provide what he considered a satisfactory Humean account, he took reasons/motives internalism to mean the following: if p is a reason for A to ϕ, then p must be able to motivate A to ϕ *under the appropriate conditions.* Williams argued that the appropriate conditions include the fact that the agent has both no false beliefs and all the relevant true beliefs pertaining to the action, as well as the fact that she deliberates correctly (which Williams left open-ended, but which includes the use of one's imagination to add elements to, and to subtract elements from, one's motivations). This *informed-desire* version of the Humean Theory of Reasons, according to which desires need

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[5] Without further constraints on what counts as a reason, the Humean theory seems to provide too many reasons. Schroeder (2007, pp. 84–102) discusses this worry, but rejects the type of fix—in the form of an informed-desire version of the Humean Theory of Reasons—which, following Bernard Williams and Michael Smith, I will endorse.

to be properly informed in order to give rise to a normative reason,[6] accounts for both the explanatory and normative dimensions of reasons: the fact that *p* must be able to motivate A means that *p* can explain A's action, and the fact that the motivation needs to occur under the specified appropriate conditions means that *p* can justify A's action.

It is helpful to think of Williams's account in terms of an actual self and an ideal self. In particular, there is a certain distance between the motivations of the agent's actual self and those of his ideal self: the latter is under appropriate conditions and determines the former's normative reasons. Note that on Williams's picture, the agent's ideal self simply *is* the actual self after sound deliberation and with all the relevant information. Thus, the actual self can easily recognize itself in the ideal self, while, at the same time, recognizing that the ideal self is better situated to determine what the actual self has reason to do. In other words, the ideal self is under the appropriate conditions for determining normative reasons for the actual self *and* these conditions are easily attainable for the actual self, so that the actual self will tend to be motivated to act on reasons determined by its ideal self. However, it is precisely because the ideal self is a function of the actual self that Williams's account does poorly in explaining how there might be normative reasons, as well as weights of reasons, which are not determined by the contingent psychology of the actual self. Indeed, every agent's ideal self and normative reasons are different, as they are dependent on the desires of the agent's actual self. So Williams's account provides what I will call "Minimal Normativity about Reasons cum Strong Desire Dependence":

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[6] While Williams provides what I have referred to as an "informed-desire" version of the Humean Theory of Reasons, he deviates from the Humean Theory of Motivation in maintaining that not only desires can motivate us; rather, Williams's (1981a, p. 105) notion of a "subjective motivational set" includes "dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, and various projects […] embodying commitments of the agent."

Minimal Normativity about Reasons cum Strong Desire Dependence: For all As (reason responsive agents), A's normative reasons and their weights are a function of A's ideal self, which is strongly dependent on the antecedent desires of A's actual self.[7]

Moreover, Williams's theory cannot provide an account of the relations between moral demands and reasons to act on such demands in a way that attains morality/reasons internalism: since certain agents might not be motivated to act on moral demands *even after* sound deliberation from their antecedent desires, these agents would not have reason to act on moral demands.

An informed-desire position that recoiled from Williams's account was presented in Michael Smith's *The Moral Problem* (1994), where Smith argues for a Humean account of motivating reasons, which explain our actions, and an anti-Humean account of normative reasons, which rationally justify our actions. Like Williams, Smith also argued that one's normative reasons are constituted by what one's fully rational or ideal self would desire to do in the circumstances. However, on Smith's account, the ideal self is different from the actual self in that it possesses the set of systematically justifiable desires, and so when one deliberates about what this self would desire in the circumstances, one tries to determine whether or not desire X would contribute to one's desires becoming systematically justified. Importantly, in contrast to Williams's account, Smith dissociates the desires of this ideal self from the contingent desires of the actual self, and so the desires that an agent has after the process of systematic justification do not depend on the actual desires that he started out with. It is "reason itself" that "determines the content of our fully rational desires, not the arbitrary fact that we have the actual desires that we have" (Smith, 1994, p. 173). Therefore, a systematically justifiable set of desires includes only

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[7] My use of the term "desires" rather than "motivations in the subjective motivational set" in formulating "Minimal Normativity about Reasons cum Strong Desire Dependence" is meant to reflect the fact that one can formulate Williams's version of the Humean Theory of Reasons in a way that is faithful to the Humean Theory of Motivation. It is worth noting that Sharon Street's (2006,2008) Humean constructivism would also fall into this general category, although Williams's and Street's accounts do differ in important explanatory and normative respects.

desires which *every* rational agent would adopt, since a justification that convinces one rational

agent to adopt desire X would convince any rational agent to do likewise. Thus, all ideal selves

would converge in their desires, and there is only *one* systematically justified set of desires. In

other words, the ideal selves of all agents, as well as their normative reasons, are the same.[8] This

account does well in explaining how there might be normative reasons, as well as weights of

reasons, which are not determined by the contingent psychology of the actual self. Therefore,

Smith's account provides what I will call "Maximal Normativity about Reasons cum Desire

Independence":

> *Maximal Normativity about Reasons cum Desire Independence:* For all As (reason-responsive agents), A's normative reasons and their weights are a function of A's ideal self, which is *not* dependent on the antecedent desires of A's actual self.[9]

This conception of reasons can potentially account for morality/reasons internalism, for *if*

reasons to act on moral demands are a subset of our shared normative reasons, then they

necessarily apply to *all* agents.

However, Michael Smith's achievement is attained by giving up on the Humean aspiration to

trace back our normative reasons to our antecedent desires. The Humean aspires to retain this

connection because (a) he is skeptical of reason's ability, in and of itself, to determine the content

of our fully rational selves; and (b) he is skeptical of the motivational efficacy of reason. Indeed,

Williams (1981a, pp. 108–109) argued, in a manner that bears on both points, that the force of

Hume's point, according to which reason cannot give rise to a motivation, lies in the fact that it is

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[8] Smith (2004, p. 264) clarifies that his account does not entail that fully rational agents will have the same tastes in food, clothes, etc. Rather, fully rational agents will converge in their desire that the very same course of action be pursued in highly specific and fully characterized choice situations. Therefore, fully rational agents may converge on a desire that in circumstances in which a desire to cheer for the Bulls has been acquired through enculturation, we cheer for the Bulls, but if we have acquired a desire to cheer for the Lakers, then we cheer for the Lakers.

[9] Smith's account does retain a dependence of normative reasons on desires in the sense that normative reasons are constituted by the desires of the fully rational self, but they are not dependent at all on the desires of the actual self.

impossible for an agent not to deliberate *from* his existing motivations; that is, it is not the case that if the agent rationally deliberated, then, whatever motivations he originally had, he would come to be motivated to φ. If one retains this Humean perspective, it would, of course, be difficult to explain how on Smith's account agents come to know about the desires of the fully rational self, given the fact that this self is entirely dissociated from their contingent antecedent desires. Moreover, there is no guarantee that on Smith's account our normative reasons will be able to motivate us. Smith argues (1994, pp. 177–180) that we will be motivated to act on normative reasons *on pain of irrationality*: one is practically irrational if one does not desire in accordance with what one believes one's fully rational self would desire in the circumstances. However, if one retains "Hume's point," as Williams understands it, the agent might claim that since his fully rational self is not a function of his actual desires, this self is too far removed from his actual self, and so it is not clear why the fully rational self either will or ought to motivate the actual self. This also means that, given the aspirations of the Humean theory to tie all normative reasons to the ability to motivate agents, there is no reason to assume that the normative reasons that Smith speaks of would be *our* reasons. Michael Smith (1994, p. 130), for his part, does not accept a Humean version of normative reasons, because he finds objectionable the "the distinctive Humean view of normative reasons" according to which "the rational thing for an agent to do is simply to act so as maximally to satisfy her desires, whatever the content of those desires," and so "what is rational for an agent to do" is "relative to what she most wants to do." The key question is whether a distinctive Humean view of normative reasons that does not have these implications can be provided. The answer, I believe, is affirmative.[10]

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[10] Mark Schroeder (2007, pp. 108–117) has tried a different tactic by arguing that the Humean Theory of Reasons is consistent with the existence of agent-neutral reasons in the following way: (a) the Humean theory does not say that for every reason there must be one single desire that explains why each person who has that reason has it; (b) each

The informed-desire Humean theorist thus seems to face a dilemma between Williams's account, which has an adequate explanatory dimension but an inadequate normative one, and Smith's account, which has an adequate normative dimension but an inadequate explanatory one. I believe that the beginnings of a reasonable middle way out of this dilemma can be found in the exchange between Williams and John McDowell about the existence of external reasons. McDowell (1998b) argued that Williams's Humean theory is too *psychologistic*: there needs to be a standard of correct deliberation that transcends the motivations of individual agents, even as corrected by Williams's notion of sound deliberation. McDowell believed that the relevant standard is an ideal agent, Aristotle's *phronimos*. The reasons that such an agent perceives may be *external* reasons for other agents, reasons which violate the assumptions of the Humean Theory of Reasons in the sense that most agents might only come to recognize them after a non-rational conversion of their motivations, rather than through sound deliberation. The postulation of an ideal ethical agent is an attractive one, for the ideal agent, who embodies the correct form of reasoning, determines the right reasons with the correct weight, precisely because these reasons are not a function of the contingent psychology of agents' actual selves. Moreover, in contrast to Michael Smith's account, there is no postulation of the ideal agent's reasons applying to *all* agents qua reason-responsive agents; rather, the scope of application of these reasons is left open-ended. Indeed, McDowell never says that external reasons necessarily apply to all agents,[11] and he concedes that it is possible, without irrationality, to fail to see reason to act in accordance

person who has a certain reason may have it in virtue of a different desire; (c) there may be reasons which can be explained by *any* possible desire, namely, agent-neutral reasons. However, following numerous criticisms, Schroeder (2012, pp. 468–469) has conceded that this argument might not work. I will not be considering Schroeder's tactic in the current paper not only because of this concession but also because my focus is on informed-desire versions of the Humean Theory of Reasons.

[11] McDowell (1998b, p. 107) gives an example of someone who does not appreciate twelve-tone music and so does not recognize the reasons, external for this agent, for listening to this music. It would seem implausible that all reason-responsive agents have a reason to listen to twelve-tone music simply because they are such agents.

with moral demands (McDowell, 1998a, p. 88). Therefore, McDowell is arguing for what I will refer to as "Conditional Maximal Normativity about Reasons cum Externalism":

> *Conditional Maximal Normativity about Reasons cum Externalism:* For all As (reason-responsive agents), *if* a normative reason applies to A, the reason's weight is a function of deliberation by an ideal ethical agent, and an externalist route, such as non-rational conversation of A's motivations, may be required for A to recognize this reason.

Williams (1995b, pp. 189–193) replied that if the ideal agent is too ideal and thus sufficiently different from and unattainable for non-ideal agents, then there is no reason to suppose that the former's reasons are reasons for the latter. Williams did concede, however, that McDowell's account might work if it can be shown that most agents *can* become the ideal agent: the *phronimos*'s reasons would indeed be reasons for A, if it were a real possibility for A to become a *phronimos*.

What the Humean can take from this exchange is that he will need to move away from Williams's position, on which there is no correct form of deliberation above and beyond the correct deliberation of specific agents, towards a position in which there is an ideal ethical agent who determines the right reasons with the correct weight. However, if the Humean wishes to utilize this framework, he needs to do three things. First, the Humean needs to offer his own account of an ideal agent who constitutes what is morally appropriate and inappropriate, preferably within the context of a sentiment-based picture of moral judgment. Second, the Humean needs to show how agents can become the ideal ethical agent in order to explain why his reasons are their reasons. Third, instead of appealing to an externalist route, the Humean would need to make use of an internalist route that ties these reasons to agents' antecedent desires. Therefore, the Humean should opt for "Conditional Maximal Normativity about Reasons cum Internalism":

Conditional Maximal Normativity about Reasons cum Internalism: For all As (reason-responsive agents), *if* a normative reason applies to A, the reason's weight is a function of deliberation by an ideal ethical agent, and (a) A can become this agent and (b) there is an internalist route between (at least one of) A's antecedent desires and this reason.

Note that if we try to develop this suggestion into an account of the reason-giving force of moral demands, we would *not* be able to show that reasons to act on moral demands necessarily apply to all reason-responsive agents, since the ideal deliberator's reasons do not necessarily apply to all agents. However, this might not be an undesirable outcome, for there do seem to be reason-responsive agents to whom we do not think that such reasons apply, for example, children of a certain age and some severely morally depraved grownups.[12] It would thus be an achievement if a desire-based theory of reasons could account for the *necessary* application of reasons to act on moral demands to nearly every human being above a certain age, i.e., for "Modest Morality/Reasons Internalism":

Modest Morality/Reasons Internalism: Moral demands *necessarily* issue reasons to act on these demands to all *moral* agents, namely, a subset of all reason-responsive agents that is sufficiently large so as to include nearly every human being above a certain age.

I call this a form of internalism, since the externalist thinks that moral demands only generate reasons for some agents, but, even for those agents, the reasons are not generated *necessarily.*

3. The Impartial Spectator and the Desire to be Worthy-of-Approval

Since I am developing a theory of reasons that is congruent with the aspirations of the Humean Theory of Reasons, it is helpful to consider the role that an ideal ethical agent plays within a sentimentalist framework, with which the historical Hume is associated. The sentimentalist story

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[12] Schroeder (2012, p. 469) makes similar remarks, focusing on children and cognitively sophisticated animals.

starts with our patterns of approval and disapproval of other agents' character traits or actions, given our sympathetic reactions to these agents and/or the people who are affected by them. However, it would be a mistake to equate moral *judgment* with moral *approbation*, for if the latter is merely a psychological response, then it seems to be subjective in ways in which we would hope that moral judgment is not. In particular, when we talk about the correctness of moral judgment, we are interested not only in the question whether we approve of a certain trait of character or action, but also whether that trait or action *merits* our approval. Hume and Smith use the general point of view and the impartial spectator, respectively, as a privileged standpoint from which the objects of our patterns of approval merit that approval.[13] Given some of the widely-discussed problems inherent in Hume's general-point-of-view account,[14] I wish to focus on Smith's impartial- spectator account in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (hereafter "TMS"), especially given the fact that this account has, as we shall see, a key desire-based component. Moreover, Smith maintained that the standpoint of the impartial spectator is constructed in a given society: "There exists in the mind of every man, an idea of [exact propriety and perfection], gradually formed from his observations upon the character and conduct both of himself and of other people. It is the slow, gradual, and progressive work of the great demigod within the breast [the impartial spectator]" (TMS VI.iii.25).[15] Therefore, Smith's account is amenable to the idea that most of us can become the ideal ethical agent.[16]

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[13] See Sayre-McCord (2013) for a discussion of this "common framework" that Hume's and Smith's accounts share.

[14] See Baier (1991, pp. 212–213), Cohon (1997, p. 844), Darwall (1994, fn. 37), and Taylor (2002, p. 53).

[15] TMS is referenced with the relevant part, section, chapter, and paragraph in the Glasgow Edition (Liberty Fund, 1976).

[16] Smith does argue that there are some situations in which, while we can imagine what the impartial spectator would approve of, and while we can deploy self-command to more closely approximate the impartial spectator's judgment, we will do so only imperfectly (TMS I.i.5.8). Moreover, Smith suggests that even the wise and virtuous man can only approximate the impartial spectator's judgments (TMS III.3.25 & VI.iii.25). Nevertheless, given Smith's other views about the impartial spectator, which I discuss in the paper, it is clear that most of us can become the impartial spectator to the degree needed for this agent's reasons to count as our reasons, thereby satisfying

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The standpoint of the impartial spectator plays a key role in the workings of our conscience. In other words, it is not merely a standpoint from which we judge others, but rather a standpoint from which we also judge ourselves. In particular, Smith notes that it is part and parcel of human life that we judge others and find others judging us, that is, that people in human society *mirror* each other. This allows us to see ourselves through the eyes of others, by internalizing the way in which others respond to us, and thus to make judgments of propriety of our own sentiments (TMS III.1.3–5). However, this cannot be all: if conscience were merely a product of actual spectators, and thus of prevalent social attitudes, how could it ever progress *beyond* these attitudes? For why should we assume that the people whose reactions we internalize provide the *correct* standard of moral judgment? Smith was sensitive to the fact that agents in a society might come to realize that the actual spectators who judge them are biased, either because they are not informed about the non-normative facts or because they have a personal stake in the circumstances, and are thus unreliable sources for determining what is, in fact, worthy of approval. Therefore, agents in a society will seek to go beyond the actual bystanders they encounter and use their *imagination* to create a well-informed and impartial bystander: "We endeavour to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it" (TMS III.1.2). The creation of an imagined impartial spectator does not happen *ex nihilo*: when we sympathize with others, according to Smith, we imagine being in the situation we take the actor to be in (TMS I.i.1.2 & I. i.1.10). Thus, sympathizing with others already makes us imagine either ourselves in the actor's situation or the actor himself in his

situation (TMS I.i.1.10–13 & VII.iii.1.4).[17] This allows us to develop our imaginative capacities and to appreciate different points of view. So the impartial spectator is constructed from our interactions with the people whom we judge and who judge us: we use our imagination to build on these interactions in order to construct an image of a spectator who represents a well-informed and impartial point of view. Although the standpoint of the impartial spectator is constructed from our interactions with other agents, the end result is different from any one of these agents' points of view: the impartial spectator is a judge that we set "between ourselves and those we live with," a person "quite candid and equitable […] who has no particular relation either to ourselves, or to those whose interests are affected by our conduct, […] but is merely a man in general […] the representative of mankind."[18] Therefore, the standard of the impartial spectator is the standard of a well-informed, impartial, and modestly idealized spectator who determines what is "fit, and right, and proper to be done" (TMS III.5.5). This standard can thus transcend the norms of the society that gave rise to it. Indeed, Smith notes that the standpoint of the impartial spectator can sometimes be used to *correct* the reactions of the actual people we encounter—both actors and spectators reacting to actors—when these reactions are not deemed appropriate from this standpoint (TMS III.2.32 & VII.iii.3.9).

Smith believed that agents in human society have a certain *motivational* structure that explains their interest in approval from well-informed and non-biased agents. Recall that Smith's story commences with the idea that agents in human society constantly judge each other and internalize these judgments: the fact that people generally care about what other people think of

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[17] See Ben-Moshe (forthcoming) for an explanation of the difference between Smith's accounts of sympathy in part I (imagining being oneself in the actor's situation) and part VII (imagining being the actor in the actor's situation) of TMS.

[18] This quote is taken from a passage which first appeared in the 2nd edition of TMS, remained with minor variations in editions 3–5, and was replaced by a slightly different passage in the 6th edition (in particular, TMS III.2.31–32). The quoted passage can be found in a footnote on pp. 129–130 of the Glasgow Edition (Liberty Fund, 1976) of TMS.

them suggests that they desire approval from others, a hypothesis that Smith explicitly endorses (TMS III.2.6). Indeed, once we are brought into human society, we "will observe that mankind approve of some of [our desires and passions], and are disgusted by others [and thus we] will be elevated in the one case, and cast down in the other" (TMS III.1.3). Smith argues that this leads us to look inwards, reflect on our desires and aversions, and alter them in accordance with the approval or disapproval of others.[19] Now, as our fellow human beings criticize and applaud us, "we become anxious to know how far we *deserve* their censure or applause" (TMS III.1.5, my emphasis). In other words, as we interact with other human beings, we start desiring not only their approval but also being *worthy* of that approval. In particular, we do not merely desire praise and dread blame, but desire to be praise-*worthy* and dread being blame-*worthy* (TMS III.2.1). The difference between the two is that "praise and blame express what actually are; praiseworthiness and blameworthiness, what naturally ought to be the sentiments of other people with regard to our character and conduct." Therefore, while the love of praise is "the desire of obtaining the favourable sentiments of our brethren," the love of praiseworthiness is "the desire of rendering ourselves the proper objects of those sentiments" (TMS III.2.25).

The development of a desire to be worthy of approval is highly plausible and can be captured in two key stages.[20] First, a desire for *weak approvability* is formed: we desire to be

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[19] The causal mechanism is such that when we reflect on our desires and aversions, they "will now often become the causes of new desires and new aversions" (TMS III.1.3). Hence, Samuel Fleischacker's (2013, section 3) suggestion that this process involves the formation of second order-desires is an apt suggestion. The causal chain that Smith has in mind seems to be the following: I notice that others approve of desire X and I care about approval from others; I reflect on my desires and notice that I don't desire X; I desire to desire X; I alter my desires so as to desire X.

[20] These developmental stages are not articulated by Smith, but are rather my attempt to demonstrate that such a desire can develop over time in individuals. Smith, for his part, thought that the desire to be worthy of approval is "natural," i.e., hard-wired into our psychology: "Man naturally desires […] to be lovely; or to be that thing which is the natural and proper object of love. He naturally dreads […] to be hateful; or to be that thing which is the natural and proper object of hatred" (TMS III.2.1). Moreover, Smith notes that the desire to be worthy of approval is not derived from the desire for approval, and that the two desires are "in many respects, distinct and independent of one another" (TMS III.2.2). However, the desire to be worthy of approval cannot be *fully* formed at the outset, since the standard of the impartial spectator— the standpoint that determines what is worthy of approval—is not yet in place.

praised only for actions that we performed and for the reasons we actually performed those actions. This desire cannot be satisfied by praise for φ-ing if one did not φ or by praise for φ-ing for reason *p* if one did φ, but did it for some reason other than *p.* To be praiseworthy in this sense is to have done the thing for which praise is being offered.[21] It is the development of the desire for weak approvability that accounts for the interest that agents have in correcting biases that are the result of others not being fully informed about the facts. Second, a desire for *strong approvability* is formed: we desire to be praised only by agents who are well-suited to praise us. This desire cannot be satisfied by praise for φ-ing if one knows that agent A is not well-suited to praise one for φ-ing. Given Smith's account, to be praiseworthy in this sense is to be praised by people who do not have a personal stake in praising us.[22] This entire developmental process can be aided by the fact that we tend to *emulate* those people we approve of and ultimately those people we believe are worthy of approval (TMS III.2.3). When the desire to be *worthy* of approval is fully-formed, agents will seek approval from spectators who know all the relevant facts and are not biased and so will seek approval from an impartial spectator, who exemplifies these characteristics. Therefore, while agents might initially wonder whether they are worthy of the approval of their fellow human beings, only the impartial spectator can fully satisfy this

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I am indebted to an anonymous referee for pressing me to clarify Smith's position on this issue as well as to Nicholas Koziolek for helping me to formulate the differences between the two developmental stages discussed above.

[21] Smith makes these points explicitly, providing ample examples (TMS III.2.4). Indeed, the desire for weak approvability is a commonplace phenomenon. Consider a child who feels satisfied when his mother praises a drawing which she thinks he has produced. As it turns out, it is the child's brother who actually drew the picture. While the child might initially be satisfied by his mother's approval, he will probably come to be dissatisfied by this form of approval precisely because his mother is wrong about the relevant facts (the identity of the painter).

[22] While Smith does not make explicit statements that support the existence of the stronger version of the desire, we need to postulate this step in the development of the desire to be worthy of approval in order to account for the fact that agents are generally not satisfied by praise from those who have a personal stake in the circumstances. It is also a commonplace experience that can be exemplified by returning to our example: once our child is satisfied with his mother's approval of his drawings only when she in fact knows that these are his drawings, he might nevertheless not be fully satisfied by her praise precisely because she has a personal stake in the circumstances; thus, the child might seek a more impartial judge to comment on the quality of his drawings, a judge who does not have a personal stake in the circumstances and who is thus better suited to assess the merits of the drawing qua drawing.

desire, since, while the jurisdiction of people in society is founded "in the desire of actual praise, and in the aversion to actual blame," the jurisdiction of the impartial spectator is founded "in the desire of praise-worthiness, and in the aversion to blame-worthiness" (TMS III.2.32). Indeed, Smith argues that the latter desire can be satisfied if we know that the impartial spectator *would* approve of our actions, even if such approval is not provided by people around us (TMS III.2.5).

4. An Adam Smithian Account of Normative and Moral Reasons

It would seem, on the face of it, that if I were to develop Smith's account of the impartial spectator into an account of normative reasons, based on Williams's understanding of normative reasons, I would need to argue that the desire to be worthy of approval would need to be the strongest desire under Williams's "appropriate conditions" and thus would need to motivate the agent under those conditions. This is so because it seems that Williams's brand of the Humean Theory of Reasons is committed to the claims that (a) the application of a normative reason to an agent necessitates *actual motivation* under the appropriate conditions; (b) the normative weight of a reason is determined by the *strength* of the agent's desire. However, the truth of both of these claims can be contested. In particular, claim (a), according to which actual motivation is required for *p* to count as a normative reason, is an artifact of the manner in which Williams initially presented his reasons/motives internalism. This claim can easily be altered in a way that is nevertheless congruent with the aspirations of the Humean Theory of Reasons: instead of focusing on being motivated under the appropriate conditions, the Humean can argue that *p* is a reason for A to ϕ only if A *could* reach the conclusion that he should ϕ by a sound deliberative route from his motivations. Indeed, Williams (1995a, p. 35; 2001, p. 91) later amended his internalism requirement to take this form. On this formulation, the Humean can retain the

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thought that an agent has a reason to ϕ only if he has a desire that could, in principle, motivate him to ϕ, without assuming that the desire in question will in fact motivate the agent to ϕ. This is so because reaching the conclusion that one should ϕ by a sound deliberative route from one's desires merely necessitates either that the desire to ϕ is

among one's motivations or that it will be among one's motivations after sound deliberation; it does not necessitate that the desire to ϕ is ultimately effective in motivating the agent to ϕ. Moreover, this new formulation can still account for both the explanatory and normative dimensions of reasons: the fact that *p* could, in principle, motivate A means that *p* can explain A's action, and the fact that this reason is recognized via "a sound deliberative route" means that *p* has a justificatory dimension.

However, recall that Williams's account is too psychologistic and provides only a minimal form of normativity about reasons. I wish to argue that a solution to this problem will also prove to be a solution to the problem in claim (b) listed above, that is, the thesis that the normative weight of a reason is determined by the strength of a desire. Mark Schroeder (2007, pp. 97–102) has called this thesis "Proportionalism" and has helpfully noted that the Humean Theory of Reasons does not entail that the weight of a reason is determined by the strength of a desire.[23] Indeed, the (revised) Williams-inspired Humean theory merely asserts that A has a reason *p* to ϕ only if A could reach the conclusion that he should ϕ by a sound deliberative route from his motivations and, more specifically, from his desires. Thus, all we need to show is that the agent could reach the conclusion that he should ϕ by a sound deliberative route from his desires, while the weight of the reason to ϕ need not be determined by the strength of any given desire. Rather,

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[23] According to Schroeder, Proportionalism is the thesis that the weight of a reason is proportional to both the strength of the agent's desire *and* the degree to which a certain action promotes that desire. The first half of the thesis is the greater challenge to the Humean Theory of Reasons and the one on which I will focus.

weights of reasons could be determined in another manner, for example, by those agents who are well suited to do so. This brings us back to my suggestion that the Humean needs to move towards a McDowellian position in which there is an ideal ethical agent who determines the right reasons, with the correct normative weight, which are reasons for nearly all other agents. As we saw, the impartial spectator is an ideal ethical agent that transcends the contingencies of individual psychologies. It is thus natural that deliberation from this standpoint would yield the right reasons. But how exactly does this standpoint get the *weight* of reasons right? Smith believed that our excessive self-love makes it difficult for us to see things from other people's perspectives (TMS III.4.3). Thus, adopting the standpoint of the impartial spectator allows the spectator to humble his self-love, since the spectator "sees that to them he is but one of the multitude in no respect better than any other in it" (TMS II.ii.2.1). Moreover, this standpoint allows the spectator to correct his perception of his own interests (which are tied to his self-love) versus the interests of others. The key idea is simple: if we want to weigh the importance of our interests versus the importance of someone else's interests, "[w]e must view them, neither from our own place nor yet from his, neither with our own eyes nor yet with his, but from the place and with the eyes of a third person, who has no particular connexion with either, and who judges with impartiality between us" (TMS III.3.3). Therefore, deliberation from the standpoint of the impartial spectator will take into account the interests of all concerned and thus yield reasons with the correct normative weight. In particular, more weight will be assigned to reasons with distinctively moral content.

So if the impartial spectator determines the right normative reasons with the correct weights and if most agents desire to be worthy of approval and can become the impartial spectator, we have attained what I called "Conditional Maximal Normativity about Reasons cum Internalism":

Conditional Maximal Normativity about Reasons cum Internalism: For all As (reason-responsive agents), *if* a normative reason applies to A, the reason's weight is a function of deliberation by an ideal ethical agent, and (a) A can become this agent and (b) there is an internalist route between (at least one of) A's antecedent desires and this reason.

Most of us can deliberate from our desire to be worthy of approval to the conclusion that we ought to perform actions because of normative reasons determined from the standpoint of the impartial spectator. To paraphrase a point I made in connection with Williams: our actual self can easily recognize itself in this ideal ethical agent, while, at the same, recognizing that the ideal agent is better situated to determine what the actual self has reason to do, so that our actual self will tend to be motivated to act on reasons determined by the ideal agent.[24] However, the deliberative route between the desire to be worthy of approval and the standpoint of the impartial spectator might still seem too tangential. In particular, there is a substantial difference between an agent who *can* adopt this standpoint and an agent who *has* adopted it. The impartial spectator can easily make demands on those agents whose conscience has taken the shape of this modestly idealized judge, and thus, it is very easy for such agents to deliberate to the right normative reasons. Smith, for his part, tends to write as if most of us have reached this stage of development: "It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct […] who, whenever we are about to act so as to affect the happiness of others, calls to us, with a voice capable of astonishing the most presumptuous of our passions, that […] when we prefer ourselves so shamefully and so blindly to others, we become the proper objects of resentment, abhorrence, and execration" (TMS III.3.4). However, a more realistic picture of human beings is one in which not all of us have shaped our conscience in the form of an impartial spectator. Therefore, if we want the Smithian theory to apply to nearly all

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[24] We need not think about our desire to be worthy of approval during deliberation. Williams (2001, p. 93) observed that an agent need not think "that is a reason for me to ϕ *in virtue of my S [subjective motivational set]*"; rather, it is because of his motivations that he will be *disposed* to think "that is a reason for me to ϕ" and to act on this reason.

human beings, we need to provide a further explanation of how those agents whose conscience has yet to take the form of an impartial spectator, but who nevertheless desire to be worthy of approval and can adopt this standpoint, come to know about the demands made by an impartial spectator. I wish to provide an answer to this question by utilizing another key idea from TMS.

Smith noticed that agents in a society tend to hold each other *accountable* and so view each other as *moral beings*: "Man is considered as a moral [being], because he is regarded as an accountable being"; more specifically, "A moral being is an accountable being. An accountable being, as the word expresses, is a being that must give an account of its actions to some other, and that consequently must regulate them according to the good-liking of this other. Man is accountable to God and his fellow creatures."[25] Importantly, a moral being—or, to use a more contemporary term, a "moral agent"—is not conceived by Smith as an agent who *is* necessarily acting in morally appropriate ways but rather as an agent who is held accountable and thus *ought* to act in morally appropriate ways. But if moral agents ought to act in morally appropriate ways, then they *ought* to adopt the standpoint of the impartial spectator, since adoption of this standpoint is required for full-blown moral action. Moreover, if "ought" implies "can," then a moral agent *can* adopt the standpoint of the impartial spectator. This means that the agent not only has the desire to be worthy of approval but also the imaginative capacities needed for adopting this standpoint. So Smith provides us with the following account of a "moral agent":

> *Moral Agent:* An agent who (a) is accountable, and thus (b) ought to act in morally appropriate ways, and thus (c) ought to adopt the standpoint of the impartial spectator,

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[25] The longer quote is taken from a passage that appeared, with minor variations, in editions 1–5 of TMS, but was withdrawn in the 6th edition. The passage continues: "But tho' he is, no doubt, principally accountable to God, in the order of time, he must necessarily conceive himself as accountable to his fellow creatures, before he can form any idea of the Deity, or of the rules by which that Divine Being will judge of his conduct." The shorter quote was added in editions 2–5. The passage, with its variations, can be found in a footnote on p. 111 of the Glasgow Edition (Liberty Fund, 1976) of TMS.

and thus (d) can adopt the standpoint of the impartial spectator, and thus (e) has both certain imaginative capacities and a certain desire (the desire to be worthy of approval).

Note, however, that this type of explanation about what moral agents *ought* to do will be successful only if we understand accountability in the normative sense and not merely in the descriptive sense. In other words, the mere sociological fact that we all demand that A give an account of his actions to us is not sufficient, in and of itself, to establish that A ought to give to us an account of his actions or that he ought to act in ways he can account for. In order to account for the fact that A ought to act in morally appropriate ways, those holding him accountable need to be *justified* in doing so. I want to provide an account that offers this justification in the context of providing an account of the reason-giving force of moral demands.

My proposed account has two parts, and it assumes that moral demands ought to be conceptualized as demands that we make on each other *under certain conditions.* According to the first part of the account, moral agents hold other moral agents accountable when they make demands on them and expect them to live up to these demands. In the moral context, demands would be *justified* and the expectation to live up to them *legitimate* if and only if they are made from the standpoint of the impartial spectator. This is so because those agents who adopt this standpoint know what constitutes the morally appropriate and inappropriate when making demands on other moral agents. This would make the accountability in question normative and not merely descriptive, since it is demanded by those agents who have the right kind of authority. Therefore, moral agents *ought* to act in morally appropriate ways and thus *ought* to adopt the standpoint of the impartial spectator.

According to the second part of the account, moral agents have *reason* to live up to the demands of those moral agents who have adopted the standpoint of the impartial spectator

precisely because living up to justified demands and legitimate expectations is *worthy* of approval. And since moral agents *desire* to be worthy of approval, this reason is explained in part, per the aspirations of the Humean Theory of Reasons, via a desire that all moral agents possess.[26] Note that this desire explains the existence of the reason "in part" because the fact that justified demands and legitimate expectations are worthy of approval also has a role in explaining the application of the reason to moral agents. Therefore, we have not only explained why agents ought to adopt the standpoint of the impartial spectator, but we have also attained an account of what I called earlier "Modest Morality/Reasons Internalism":

> *Modest Morality/Reasons Internalism:* Moral demands *necessarily* issue reasons to act on these demands to all *moral* agents, namely, a subset of all reason-responsive agents that is sufficiently large so as to include nearly every human being above a certain age.

More specifically, those moral agents who have adopted the standpoint of the impartial spectator make demands on other moral agents—both moral agents who have adopted this standpoint and moral agents who have yet to adopt it—who, in turn, have reason to act on these demands. As it happens, nearly all of us are moral agents: nearly all human beings above a certain age are held accountable, ought to act in morally appropriate ways, and have the required imaginative and motivational capacities to act in morally appropriate ways. The *necessity* of the application of reasons to act on moral demands to moral agents can be understood as independence from *strength* of desire: the weight of a reason to act on moral demands need not be determined by the

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[26] The idea of conceptualizing reasons to act on moral demands in terms of a reason to live up to the legitimate expectations of others, which, in turn, is explained by a social desire, was briefly raised by Schroeder (2012, p. 470). Schroeder suggested the desire for approval or esteem. Williams (1995a, pp. 41–42) also mentions a scenario in which agents have a motivation to attain the respect of other people—specifically, those people who they themselves respect—in order to explain how blame can relate to a motivation in most people's motivational set. However, neither Schroeder nor Williams develops this suggestion into an account that explains why the relevant others are *appropriate* in setting the standard of correctness for our expectations. Moreover, neither the desire for approval nor a desire for respect necessarily tracks approval from or respect of the *right* agents as does the desire to be worthy of approval.

strength of the desire to be worthy of approval; rather, the weight of this reason, like the weight of all normative reasons, will be determined by deliberation from the standpoint of the impartial spectator, and so the reason can have (the most) significant normative weight.

5. Objections and Replies

There are several objections that one could raise to the proposed account. First, one could argue that given what is natural for the Humean theorist to accept, my explanation for the weight of reasons is ad hoc. David Enoch (2011, pp. 438–439) has argued that even if it is the case that the Humean Theory of Reasons does not entail Proportionalism, the Humean must also show that there is a non-ad hoc way for him to reject Proportionalism, especially since he is committed to a close connection between desire-strength and reason-strength at one extreme of the desire/reason strength continuum: no desire—or a "desire of strength zero"—entails no reason. However, if Proportionalism is rejected, then the Humean seems to be committed to there not being a similar connection between other points on the continuum. Enoch wonders why this discontinuity if "the null-point on the continuum is just another point on the continuum." However, we are familiar with many practices in which, while it may be up to us whether or not to enter the practice, once we are in the practice, someone else gets to dictate what we ought to do. For example, while one might choose whether or not to take Professor X's class, once one is enrolled in Professor X's class, one must adhere to the requirements that Professor X has specified in the syllabus.[27] There seems to be an important break in the so-called "continuum," namely, the break between not being in the practice and being in the practice. I have argued, analogously, that while A needs to desire to be worthy of approval for the reasons that are determined from the standpoint of the

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[27] I am indebted to David Enoch for this example.

impartial spectator to apply to A, once these reasons do apply to A, their weight is not up to A to determine. Is this an ad hoc explanation? The tendency to answer this question in the affirmative is most likely the result of Williams's original formulation of the internalism requirement, which many have understood as requiring *actual motivation* for *p* to count as a normative reason for A. This emphasis on actual motivation makes it natural to assume that the normative weight of a reason is associated with the strength of a desire for the following reason: if the strength of a desire determines the likelihood of motivation and if the likelihood of motivation determines the weight of a reason, then the strength of a desire determines the weight of a reason. However, if we understand the Humean theory as trying to capture the intuition that, in principle, there should be a sound deliberative route from an agent's desires to the reasons that apply to him— and these desires *could* motivate the agent to perform actions for those reasons—then the explanation of the weight of reasons is not ad hoc: the idea that the normative weight of a reason is determined by the strength of a desire is not something that the informed-desire Humean theorist has even *prima facie* reason to endorse.

Second, we seem to face the following dilemma: On the one hand, if the weights of reasons are determined from the standpoint of an *impartial* spectator, then it would seem that partial reasons have no weight whatsoever. On the other hand, if the weights of partial reasons are not determined from the standpoint of the impartial spectator, then the account is incomplete. I wish to argue that the (non-zero) weight of partial reasons can be determined from the standpoint of the impartial spectator. Given the role that Smith assigns to the impartial spectator in humbling our self-love and weighing competing interests, there is no reason to assume that deliberation from this standpoint would only yield weights for impartial reasons; rather, partial reasons can also be assigned weights from this standpoint and weighed against impartial reasons. Moreover,

impartial reasons will not always prevail. For example, when weighing competing interests from the standpoint of the impartial spectator, one might discover that one has greater reason to save one's wife than two strangers, since even a neutral observer, who has no connection to any of the people in this scenario, could take into account the actor's personal commitments and judge in favor of him saving his wife.[28] Indeed, the impartial spectator is not a standpoint that maximizes overall utility in an impersonal way, as Rawls (1999, pp. 23–24) once argued; rather, the impartial spectator is a *sympathetic* spectator,[29] who is attentive to the specific contours of the situation. But what does seem unlikely is that deliberation from this standpoint would yield the conclusion that Mary's reason to help John, who has been hit by a car, would have less weight than her reason to see the Rambo movie. This is what I meant when I noted that the impartial spectator would give more weight to reasons with moral content. Of course, some actions do not bear on other agents *at all*, for example, whether Mary sees Rambo or Police Academy. This does not mean that an impartial spectator would assign zero weight to the reasons for such actions; rather, given the fact that the actions in question do not bear on others, an impartial spectator would approve of those reasons' weights being determined by the agent's desires and their strength. Therefore, whether one has a reason to see either Rambo or Police Academy will depend on whether and to what extent one desires to see an action movie or a comedy, respectively.[30] However, the reason to help someone in need will trump the reason to see a

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[28] Thus, there is no reason to assume that Williams's (1981b, pp. 11–14) worry about Kantian morality—according to which impartial morality might require us to give up the grounding projects that partially constitute our character—would apply when acting on reasons determined from the standpoint of the impartial spectator.

[29] Smith writes, for example, that only "when the heart of every impartial spectator entirely sympathizes" with the "passions of human nature" are these passions "proper" (TMS II.i.2.2). Or, later in TMS, he writes that the "precise or distinct measure by which this fitness or propriety of affection can be ascertained or judged of […] can be found nowhere but in the sympathetic feelings of the impartial and well-informed spectator" (TMS VII.ii.1.49).

[30] To paraphrase Michael Smith's point, agents who adopt the standpoint of the impartial spectator need not have the same tastes in food, clothes, etc. (see note 8 above); rather, such tastes can be determined by the agent's specific desires.

movie, regardless of one's idiosyncratic movie-viewing desires (although, as argued, for this ranking of reasons to apply to A, A is required to have the desire to be worthy of approval).

Third, one might worry that my account of normative reasons is not sufficiently Humean, because reasons for action are not sufficiently desire-dependent. In response to this worry, I wish to emphasize that my Adam Smithian account does retain the Williams-inspired Humean idea that there has to be a sound deliberative route between our antecedent desires and our normative reasons. Thus, the account also retains the explanatory dimension inherent in the Humean claim that "any reason for action must be something that *could* explain someone's acting in the way for which it is a reason" (McDowell, 1998b, p. 98). To be sure, the required deliberation from one's desire to be worthy of approval might be long and complex, but Williams (1981a, p. 110) himself was open to the idea that "there is an essential indeterminacy in what can be counted a rational deliberative process" and that "practical reasoning is a heuristic process, and an imaginative one." Furthermore, a moral agent (who desires to be worthy of approval) might not always act on the reasons determined from the standpoint of the impartial spectator. However, in that case, the agent would fail to act on reasons that are *his* reasons and that could, in principle, motivate him. Now, a potential objector might further argue that my account is not sufficiently Humean, because some agents might *not* desire to be worthy of approval, and so we face the following dilemma: either the weight of these agents' reasons is determined by the impartial spectator, or it is not. If it is, then the account is not Humean, since all agents have the same normative reasons *regardless* of their desires. If it is not, then my account is not complete, for we need an account of these agents' reasons. Apart from the fact that it is questionable whether there are any non-disabled human beings above a certain age who do not desire to be worthy of approval *at all*, the Humean response should be that if there are such agents, we may not want to

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say that they are distinctively human and so we would not know what to make of their reasons. Indeed, Smith argues that human beings have developed the desire to be worthy of approval, and not only the desire for mere approval, as the latter "would not alone have rendered [them] fit for the society for which [they were] made"; rather, it is the desire to be worthy of approval that is "necessary" to make human beings "really fit" for society (TMS III.2.7). Therefore, the desire to be worthy of approval is needed in order to make us the type of social beings that we are, and our social systems, or perhaps even our species, are structured so as to instill such a desire.

6. Conclusion

It is time to take stock. I presented a dilemma for the informed-desire Humean reasons theorist, according to which he is forced to choose between an adequate explanatory account and an adequate normative account of reasons for action. I then offered a middle road out of this dilemma by offering a sentimentalist version of ideal observer theory that is modeled in part on McDowell's Aristotelean ideal. In particular, the proposed Smithian account incorporates McDowell's claim that there should be a standard of correct deliberation that transcends the motivations of individual agents, even as corrected by Williams's notion of sound deliberation, while insisting, per Williams, that agents should be able to deliberate to this correct form of deliberation from their desires (in my account, from the desire to be worthy of approval). Put differently, Smith's impartial spectator account can be developed into a desire-based account of normative reasons that idealizes our actual selves *to the right degree.* Thus, on the one hand, the account is congruent with the motivational aspirations of those who seek to retain a connection between normative reasons and the contingent desires of our actual selves. But, on the other hand, the account is congruent with the normative aspirations of those who seek to detach the

weight of normative reasons from the contingent desires of our actual selves (without assuming, like Michael Smith, that there are reasons that apply to all reason-responsive agents). Moreover, moral demands *necessarily*—that is, independently of the strength of the relevant desire—issue reasons to act on these demands to all *moral* agents, a subset of all reason-responsive agents that is sufficiently large so as to include nearly every human being above a certain age. These reasons can have the greatest normative weight and so be overriding. Thus, the unified Smithian account gets the weight of reasons right and explains the reason-giving force of moral demands.[31]

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