Original Article

**The challenge of amoralism**

Voin Milevski

Institute for Philosophy, 18-20 Čika Ljubina Street, Belgrade, 11000, Serbia. voinmilevski1@gmail.com

**Abstract**

According to unconditional motivational internalism, there is an *a priori* constraint on an agent’s forming a sincere moral judgement, namely that she is, at least to some minimal extent, motivated to act as it dictates. In order to undermine this internalist position, proponents of motivational externalism typically appeal to the possibility of the amoralist—i.e. an individual who makes sincere moral judgements, but who is completely unmoved to act accordingly. This strategy is known as the *challenge of amoralism*. Against this strategy, I will argue that in order to represent a genuine case of amoralism, and a credible counterexample to unconditional motivational internalism, an agent would have to simultaneously satisfy an epistemically inconsistent set of conditions. Thus, the conclusion I will attempt to defend in this paper is that the challenge of amoralism does not succeed in posing a legitimate threat to unconditional motivational internalism.

Motivational internalism, amoralism, sincerity, mental assent, epistemic inconsistency.

**Funding information**

Research for this article was supported by the project “Dynamic Systems in Nature and Society: Philosophical and Empirical Aspects” [grant number 179041], financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most widely debated questions in moral psychology concerns the relation between the formation of sincere first-person moral judgements and the motivation to act as these judgements dictate. Whereas philosophers on both sides of this debate concede that the relation between people’s sincere moral judgements and the appropriate motivation is *reliable*, in the sense that ‘*a change in motivation* follows reliably in the wake of *a change in moral judgement*’ (Smith, 1994, p. 71), they tend to disagree over what else may be said about the nature of this relation. Thus, proponents of motivational internalism argue that there is an *a priori* necessity between an agent’s sincere moral judgements and her motivation to act as these judgements dictate. That is to say, internalists claim that there is an *a priori* constraint on an agent’s forming a moral judgement, namely that she is, at least to some minimal extent, motivated to act accordingly (see e.g. Darwall, 1983, pp. 51–5; Dreier, 1990; Smith, 1994; Lenman, 1999; Miller, 2008, pp. 234–36; Bedke, 2009; Bromwich, 2010, 2016; Björklund et al., 2012, pp. 124–37; Björnsson et al., 2015).

Proponents of motivational externalism argue, in contrast, that the relation between the sincere making of moral judgements and the appropriate motivation is external, contingent, and, thus, completely dissociable. On this view, there is nothing problematic or incoherent in the idea of an agent who makes sincere moral judgements but remains completely unmoved by them. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that externalists characteristically defend their view by appealing to the possibility of the ‘amoralist’—i.e. an individual who appears to make sincere moral judgements, but who completely lacks the corresponding motivation (see e.g. Railton, 1986, p. 169; Brink, 1989, pp. 46–50; Thomson, 1996, pp. 118–20; Svavarsdóttir, 1999, pp. 176–83; Shafer-Landau, 2000, p. 274; van Roojen, 2002, p. 35; Zangwill, 2008, p. 101).This strategy is known as the *challenge of amoralism*. The central aim of this paper is to show that this externalist strategy fails to damage motivational internalism. Now, although most of the points I will make here apply to all versions of motivational internalism, I will primarily focus on the most straightforward version of this position—i.e. the so-called *unconditional motivational internalism*. In its most concise form, this view can be stated as follows:

If an agent sincerely judges that to φ in circumstances *C* is the best option available to her, then, as a matter of conceptual or *a priori* necessity, she will be motivated to φ in *C*.

Three important explanations are here in order. First, unconditional motivational internalism needs to be sharply distinguished from *act-internalism*—that is, from the view endorsed by Richard Hare (1952), according to which, if an agent sincerely makes a moral judgement, then she inevitably *acts* as this judgement dictates. Notice that act-internalism represents an implausibly strong version of internalism; it essentially relies on an incorrect assumption that an agent’s motivation necessarily leads to action. On the other hand, unconditional motivational internalism only tells us that every sincere moral judgement must necessarily exert *some* (i.e. not-overriding) motivating force that need not ultimately lead to action. As such, this view is in accordance with the psychological fact that someone could be motivated to φ in circumstances *C* but never get around to doing anything about it, since various internal and external factors may override her motivation to φ when these circumstances occur.

Second, it might be helpful to juxtapose unconditional motivational internalism with the so-called *rationalist* version of motivational internalism—i.e. the position according to which, if an agent sincerely judges that to φ in circumstances *C* is the best option available to her, then, barring irrationality, that agent will be motivated, at least to some minimal degree, to φ in *C* (see e.g. Korsgaard, 1986; Smith, 1994, p. 61; Wallace, 2006; Wedgwood, 2007, pp. 23–26; van Roojen, 2010). Now, since on the rationalist version of motivational internalism an agent’s motivation to act in accordance with her moral judgements depends crucially on her not being practically irrational, the proponents of this position need to come up with some substantial characterization of practical irrationality. However, to come up with such a characterization is a notoriously difficult task. Thus, on the most widely accepted account, practical irrationality represents a subjective matter of *improper motivational responsiveness* to the practical reasons that an agent has available to her by her own lights (see Miller, 2008, p. 247). Given this account, it seems that rage, grief, passion, distraction, depression, physical or mental illness, and so on, ‘could cause us to act irrationally, that is, to fail to be motivationally responsive to the rational considerations available to us’ (Korsgaard, 1986, p. 13). Yet, it is not very difficult to generate doubt about this characterization of practical irrationality. Namely, note that the list of psychological conditions that could cause an agent’s improper motivational responsiveness is worryingly open-ended.[[1]](#footnote-1) Moreover, observe that not one of the psychological conditions that are listed is easily defined. One way to avoid these problems would be to stipulate that an agent is practically irrational if she suffers from *any* psychological conditionwhich is such as to frustrate the connection between her sincere moral judgement and the appropriate motivation. But, to be sure, if practical irrationality is interpreted in this way, then the rationalist version of motivational internalism comes out as vacuous (see Miller, 2003, p. 221; see also Roskies, 2003, p. 53). Of course, this point does not necessarily undermine this internalist position. Obviously, to say that it is *difficult* to come up with the substantial and relevant characterization of practical irrationality is not to say that it is *impossible* to come up with such a characterization. It is worth noting, however, that unconditional motivational internalism can avoid this problem completely, for it seeks to account for the cases of improper motivational responsiveness without any need to provide the substantial characterization of practical irrationality. In this respect, I am inclined to say that unconditional motivational internalism has an advantage over its rationalist cousin.

 Third, and most importantly, note that the formulation of unconditional motivational internalism provides us with a very clear description of the conditions that an agent would have to simultaneously satisfy in order to represent a genuine case of amoralism, and, consequently, a credible threat to this version of internalism. There seem to be three such conditions (see Milevski, 2017, pp. 48–49):

1. An agent would have to make a *sincere* moral judgement.
2. An agent would have to be a *competent speaker* with regard to moral concepts.
3. An agent would have to be *completely unmoved* to act in accordance with her own moral judgement.

The claim that I intend to defend here is that any combination of the above three conditions amounts to epistemic inconsistency and that, therefore, the challenge of amoralism does not succeed in posing a legitimate threat to unconditional motivational internalism. The plan for this paper is as follows. In the following two sections I will develop and defend an account of what it means to make a sincere moral judgement. I will first argue that there is an important constraint on an agent’s forming a sincere moral judgement according to which if she sincerely asserts a certain moral judgement, then she must mentally assent to what is asserted (Section 2). I will then attempt to establish a very close relation between an agent’s mental assent and her motivation. If my contention is right, it will turn out that evidence sufficient to warrant an agent’s assertion of a moral judgement is also sufficient to compel her to acknowledge that she does not in fact sincerely assent to this judgement, if she is not, even to a minimal extent, motivated to act accordingly (Section 3). After developing and defending my positive proposal of this account, I will explore its implications for the debate about amoralism (Section 4).

2. SINCERITY AND MENTAL ASSENT

In this section, I will consider what it is for a moral judgement to be sincere. There is a vast literature on the problem of sincerity in speech and I cannot do justice to all of it here (see e.g. Searle, 1969, p. 65; Ridge, 2006, p. 501; Green, 2007, p. 268; Davis, 2008, p. 428; Eriksson, 2011, p. 215; Joyce, 2016, p. 23). My approach instead will be to outline the view to this problem that I find most independently plausible and which best serves to illuminate the sincerity of moral judgements. The general view of sincerity in speech that I want to adopt here is the view according to which an utterance is sincere if and only if it communicates something the speaker mentally assents to (Stokke, 2014, p. 496). The precise nature of this view is best understood in light of Shoemaker’s (1996) distinction between mental and linguistic assent. When it comes to mental assent, several points are especially worth mentioning. First, to mentally assent to a certain proposition is to have a certain attitude toward this proposition—i.e. mental assent is, properly understood, the *acceptance* of a proposition. Also, mental assent is always conscious and it is typically the result of an agent’s conscious deliberation (Shoemaker, 1996, p. 78). Finally, it is important to note that mental assent cannot be insincere, for ‘one cannot mentally assent to a proposition half-heartedly, or in jest, or despite (consciously) not really accepting it’ (Stokke, 2014, p. 517). Linguistic assent, on the other hand, is best understood as the linguistic expression of our mental assent. In contrast to mental assent, linguistic assent can be sincere or insincere, although, as Shoemaker rightly points out, ‘all linguistic assent offers itself as sincere, whether it is or not’ (Shoemaker, 1996, p. 78).

With these considerations in mind, I think we are now in a position to draw the distinction between sincere and insincere moral judgements in a perfectly straightforward way. Thus, if an agent mentally assents to a moral proposition *M*, then her moral judgement will be sincere if and only if it adequately expresses her assent to *M*. To get clearer on this, consider the following proposition:

(S) I sincerely judge that I should φ in circumstances *C*, but I do not assent to the content of this judgement.

The serious assertion of (S) would no doubt introduce a certain amount of confusion and unnecessary puzzlement. This is understandable, for (S) seems to represent an instance of what Michael Cholbi (2009, p. 496) calls moral *Moore-paradoxical proposition.*[[2]](#footnote-2) As Cholbi explains, such propositions are:

[C]onjunctions of (1) a proposition with explicit moral content (i.e., propositions attributing moral rightness or wrongness, virtuousness or viciousness, goodness or badness, etc. to acts, persons, practices, states of affairs, etc.) and (2) a proposition expressing indifference to acting upon, or forming the attitudes or intentions ordinarily appropriate to, the moral proposition stated in (1). (p. 496)

Although, strictly speaking, (S) is a conjunction of (1) a proposition with explicit moral content and (2) a proposition expressing the speaker’s lack of assent to the content of the proposition stated in (1), I am inclined to believe that it represents a genuine instance of moral Moore-paradoxical proposition. Indeed, the paradoxicality in Cholbi’s examples of such propositions has essentially the same source as the paradoxicality of (S). Namely, in both cases, the propositions are *epistemically self-defeating* in the sense that they require the speaker to have ‘conflicting rational stances toward one and the same body of evidence’ (Cholbi, 2009, p. 501).[[3]](#footnote-3) In order to see this, note that the assertion of (S) is equivalent to the assertion of the following incoherent sentence:

(S’) Based on a certain body of evidence *E*, I sincerely judge that I should φ in circumstances *C*, but I do not have sufficient evidence to assent to the content of this judgement.

Now, the main problem with the serious assertion of (S’) stems from the fact that if the speaker understands herself to have evidence *E* sufficient to warrant the assertion of ‘I sincerely judge that I should φ in circumstances *C*’, then *E* must also be sufficient for her to assent to what is asserted by this judgement. In fact, her dissent from the content of this judgement would be a clear indicator that her assertion of this judgement must be insincere. It is in this sense that the serious assertion of (S’), as well as any other moral Moore-paradoxical proposition, indicates that the speaker has conflicting rational stances toward the body of evidence that warrants the assertion of this proposition. As such, any sentence that implies both an agent’s sincerity in uttering it and her lack of assent to its content involves epistemic inconsistency. For reasons of simplicity and brevity, let us state the main conclusion of this section in the form of the following principle:

P1: Sincerely asserting a moral judgement is epistemically inconsistent with not assenting to what is asserted.

As we can see, P1 expresses an important constraint on an agent’s forming a sincere moral judgement—namely, that if she sincerely asserts a certain moral judgement, then she must assent to what is asserted. At this point, it should be clear that if an agent’s moral judgement fails to meet this constraint, we are entitled to conclude that the assertion of her judgement cannot be sincere. The important point I also wish to emphasize here is that this constraint does not seem to involve the truth of any philosophical view on moral motivation. Rather, it seems that both motivational internalism and externalism must fully accommodate this constraint in order to yield a plausible and intuitively attractive account of the relation between sincere moral judgements and the appropriate motivation.

3. MENTAL ASSENT AND MOTIVATION

In this section, we will have a closer look at the relation between an agent’s mental assent to the content of her own moral judgement and her motivation to act as this judgement dictates. I intend to show that if an agent fully assents to the content of some particular moral proposition *M*, then she *must* be motivated (at least to some extent) to act as *M* dictates. In order to make this point clearer, consider two agents, Peter and Michael, engaged in an argument about whether it is morally permissible to eat animal products. Whereas Peter believes that it is morally impermissible to eat animal products, Michael believes that eating animal products is perfectly permissible. Suppose now that, based on a certain body of evidence *E*, Peter succeeds in convincing Michael that eating animal products is morally impermissible, so that he comes to revise his moral judgement about this issue. What will happen to Michael’s motives? Clearly, we would expect them to change. Although Michael previously lacked the motivation to refrain from purchasing and consuming animal products, we would expect him now to be so motivated (at least to some minimal extent). But suppose we ask Michael about his motivation to refrain from consuming animal products, and, much to our astonishment, he gives us the following answer:

(A) Based on evidence *E*, I honestly think that I should refrain from eating animal products, but *E* is not sufficient to provide me with any motivation whatsoever to refrain from eating these products.

I am sure that most of us would find Michael’s answer extraordinarily puzzling, and it is not particularly difficult to explain why this is so.[[4]](#footnote-4) Namely, if evidence *E* is sufficient to warrant Michael’s mental assent to the moral proposition according to which he should stop eating any animal products, then *E* must either provide him with at least some (i.e. not-overriding) motivation to stop eating these products, or compel him to acknowledge that he does not in fact assent to this proposition. As such, Michael’s serious assertion of (A) requires him to have conflicting rational stances toward one and the same body of evidence, and, in that sense, it involves epistemic inconsistency. Let me put this point in the form of the following principle:

P2: If evidence *E* is sufficient to warrant an agent’s assent to the moral judgement *M*, then *E* must either provide her with at least some (i.e. not-overriding) motivation to act as *M* prescribes, or compel her to acknowledge that she does not in fact assent to the content of *M*.

P2 expresses the second constraint on an agent’s forming a sincere moral judgement. As we can see, this principle tells us that the relation between an agent’s assent to some moral proposition and her motivation to act as this proposition dictates is very close indeed. And, because this is so, many externalists will no doubt raise the objection that P2 smuggles in substantive internalist assumptions and, therefore, ultimately begs the question against their position. Although this objection may appear to be compelling, I will argue that it fails to establish its intended conclusion.

Note first that the only way for externalists to make their attack on P2 convincing is to provide an independent justification—that is, a justification the plausibility of which does not assume the truth of their own position—for the claim that an agent’s assent to the content of her sincere moral judgement does not necessarily involve suitable motivation. In other words, they need an independent justification for the claim that an agent can fully assent to some particular moral proposition without being, at least to some extent, motivated to act accordingly. I think, however, there are persuasive reasons to doubt that externalists can come up with such a justification for this claim. The principal reason for this doubt, in my opinion, has to do with the immense difficulty of establishing the complete absence of an agent’s motivation to perform a certain action. At present, we cannot directly assess people’s motivation. Of course, it is possible to assess motivation by relying on people’s self-reports, but this procedure has very serious limitations. First of all, observe that such self-reports could be heavily influenced by the fact that the possession or absence of some moral motivations is socially undesirable—e.g. it is reasonable to suppose that most people would not report their motivation to discriminate against someone on the basis of their race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, etc. In addition, this method for assessing motivation would be seriously limited by people’s inadequate conscious understanding of their own psychological (i.e. motivational) states. Arguably, there are a number of various misconceptions about our motivation. Thus, for example, one of these misconceptions is that the strength of motivation is to be determined by its ‘phenomenological quality’ or ‘felt intensity’. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that a phenomenologically intense motivational state may actually be motivationally weaker than a competing motivational state with little or no phenomenological intensity (see e.g. Charlton, 1988, p. 127; Mele, 1998, p. 26). Consider an example that illustrates this possibility:

[A] morally upright psychiatrist who experiences, to her own consternation, a phenomenologically intense urge for a sexual romp with a seductive patient, may have, in a desire that has little phenomenological kick, a stronger inclination to forego that course of action. (Mele, 1998, p. 26)

In order to avoid these and similar difficulties, researchers in experimental social psychology typically assess motivation in terms of the speed, strength, and perseverance with which people perform actions (Toure-Tillery & Fishbach, 2011, 2014). Yet, when we take into account that all of these factors essentially depend on an agent’s *committing* an action, it is highly unlikely that they could be of any use in conclusively determining the complete absence of her *motivation*, especially given the fact that motivation need not ultimately lead to action (see Milevski, 2017, p. 49).

The second reason for the doubt that externalists can come up with an independently plausible justification for the claim that an agent’s assent to the content of her sincere moral judgement does not necessarily involve suitable motivation has to do with the fact that someone’s not performing an action that is prescribed by her sincere moral judgement should not be taken as a conclusive evidence that she is in fact *completely* unmotivated to act accordingly (see e.g. Cholbi, 2009, p. 497, 2011, p. 35).[[5]](#footnote-5) To be sure, the fact that an agent does not φ when circumstances *C* occur does not tell us anything about whether she assents to, or dissents from, the content of her judgement that she should φ when circumstances *C* occur. Similarly, the fact that an agent does not perform an action that is in accordance with the judgement that she assents to does not preclude her from having at least *some* motivation to perform this action. But, if this is so, then the externalist objection to P2 seems to lack any argumentative strength. As such, I think we can conclude that, at least until we are presented with a much better justification of the claim that an agent can fully assent to some particular moral proposition without being at least to some extent motivated to act accordingly, the externalist objection to P2 fails. And, until externalists eventually succeed in providing us with such a justification, I think we can grant that the truth of P2 does not involve the truth of any philosophical view on the relation between sincere moral judgements and the appropriate motivation. Therefore, we can justifiably conclude that if an agent’s moral judgement fails to satisfy the constraint expressed by P2, then the assertion of her judgement cannot be sincere.

4. THE CHALLENGE OF AMORALISM

What we have learned from the foregoing discussion is that sincerely asserting a moral judgement is epistemically inconsistent with not assenting to what is asserted, and that evidence sufficient to warrant an agent’s assertion of a moral judgement, is sufficient to compel her to acknowledge that she does not in fact sincerely assent to this judgement, if she is completely unmoved to act accordingly. This result has important implications for the debate about amoralism. To make this point clearer, recall that in order for an agent to represent a genuine case of amoralism, and, consequently, a credible counterexample to unconditional motivational internalism, she would have to simultaneously satisfy the following three conditions:

1. She would have to make a *sincere* moral judgement.
2. She would have to be a *competent speaker* with regard to moral concepts.
3. She would have to be *completely unmoved* to act in accordance with her own moral judgement.

However, based on the account of sincerity developed in the previous two sections, it is not very difficult to show that any combination of these three conditions amounts to some sort of *epistemic inconsistency*:

1. Thus, if an agent who is a competent speaker with regard to moral concepts makes a moral judgement, but is not, even to a minimal extent, motivated to act accordingly, then, based on P1 and P2, it follows that the judgement in question cannot be sincere. As we have seen in the preceding sections, if evidence *E* is sufficient to warrant an agent’s assent to the moral judgement, then *E* must either provide her with at least *some* motivation to act as this judgement prescribes, or compel her to acknowledge that she does not in fact assent to the content of this judgement, and that, as a result, her assertion of this judgement must be insincere. Given this, the conjunction of conditions (b) and (c) is epistemically inconsistent with the condition (a).[[6]](#footnote-6)
2. Similarly, if an agent who is a competent speaker with regard to moral concepts makes a sincere moral judgement, then, based on P1 and P2, it follows that she must be at least minimally motivated to act accordingly, or she has conflicting rational stances toward the body of evidence that warrants the assertion of her judgement. The conjunction of conditions (a) and (b) is, thus, epistemically inconsistent with the condition (c).
3. Finally, if an agent claims that she sincerely commits herself to a certain moral position, but does not introspect even slight tendency toward acting accordingly, then, based on P1 and P2, she either possesses an inadequate understanding of her psychological—more precisely, motivational—states, or she does not fully understand what it means to sincerely commit herself to a certain moral position.So, the conjunction of conditions (a) and (c) is epistemically inconsistent with the condition (b).[[7]](#footnote-7)

The conclusion is, therefore, that in order to represent a genuine case of amoralism, an agent would have to simultaneously satisfy an *epistemically inconsistent* set of conditions. Thus, by insisting that the relation between sincere moral judgements and the appropriate motivation is dissociable, motivational externalism fails to meet the constraints expressed by P1 and P2. On the other hand, unconditional motivational internalism seems to straightforwardly meet both of these constraints. I take this point to be essential to a proper assessment of the challenge of amoralism. Namely, given that unconditional motivational internalism can—while motivational externalism cannot—fully accommodate both P1 and P2, and given that it does not lead to any sort of epistemic inconsistency, it is utterly unsubstantiated to claim that the moral outlook of amoralist individuals—whose constellation of attitudes toward the body of evidence that warrants the assertion of their moral judgements is epistemically self-defeating—can be used to undermine the plausibility of this internalist position. And, since this is so, we are entitled to conclude that the challenge of amoralism does not succeed in providing us with persuasive reasons against accepting unconditional motivational internalism.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank the anonymous referee from this journal for very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

**References**

Adler, J. E. (2002). *Belief’s own ethics*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Bedke, M. S. (2009). Moral judgment purposivism: saving internalism from amoralism. *Philosophical Studies*, 144, 189–209.

Björklund, F., Björnsson, G., Eriksson, J., Olinder, R. F., & Strandberg, C. (2012). Recent work on motivational internalism. *Analysis*, 72, 124–137.

Björnsson, G., Strandberg, C., Olinder, R., Eriksson, J., & Björklund, F. (Eds.). (2015). *Motivational Internalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Brink, D. (1989). *Moral realism and the foundations of ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bromwich, D. (2010). Clearing conceptual space for cognitivist motivational internalism. *Philosophical Studies*, 148, 343–367.

Bromwich, D. (2016). Motivational internalism and the challenge of amoralism. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 24, 452–471.

Charlton, W. (1988). *Weakness of will*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Cholbi, M. (2009). Moore’s paradox and moral motivation. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 12, 495–510.

Cholbi, M. (2011). Depression, listlessness, and moral motivation. *Ratio*, 24, 28–45.

Darwall, S. (1983). *Impartial reason*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Davis, W. (2008). Replies to Green, Szabó, Jeshion, and Siebel. *Philosophical Studies*, 137, 427–445.

de Almeida, C. (2001). What Moore’s paradox is about. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 62, 33–58.

Dreier, J. (1990). Internalism and speaker relativism. *Ethics*, 101, 6–26.

Eriksson, J. (2011). Straight talk: conceptions of sincerity in speech. *Philosophical Studies*, 153, 213–234.

Foot, P. (1978). *Virtues and vices*. Oxford: Blackwell; Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Green, M. (2007). *Self-expression*. Oxford University Press.

Hare, R. M. (1952). *The language of morals*. Oxford University Press.

Joyce, R. (2016). *Essays in moral skepticism*. Oxford University Press.

Lenman, J. (1999). The externalist and the amoralist. *Philosophia*, 27, 441–457.

Mele, A. (1998). Motivational strength. *Noûs*, 32, 23-36.

Milevski, V. (2017). Weakness of will and motivational internalism. *Philosophical Psychology*, 30, 44–57.

Korsgaard, C. (1986). Skepticism about practical reason. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 83, 5–25.

Miller, A. (2003). *Contemporary metaethics: an introduction*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Miller, C. (2008). Motivational internalism. *Philosophical Studies*, 139, 233–255.

Railton, P. (1986). Moral realism. *The Philosophical Review*, 95, 163–207.

Ridge, M. (2006). Sincerity and expressivism. *Philosophical Studies*, 131, 487–510.

Roskies, A. (2003). Are ethical judgments intrinsically motivational? Lessons from ‘acquired sociopathy’. *Philosophical Psychology*, 16, 51–66.

Searle, J. (1969). *Speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shafer-Landau, R. (1998). Moral judgment and moral motivation. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 48, 353–358.

Shafer-Landau, R. (2000). A defence of motivational externalism. *Philosophical Studies*, 97, 267–291.

Shoemaker, S. (1996). Moore’s paradox and self-knowledge. In *The first-person perspective: and other essays*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. 74–93.

Smith, M. (1994). *The moral problem*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Stokke, A. (2014). Insincerity. *Noûs*, 48, 496–520.

Svavarsdóttir, S. (1999). Moral cognitivism and motivation. *The Philosophical Review*, 108, 161–219.

Thomson, J. J. (1996). Moral objectivity. In *Moral relativism and moral objectivity*, (eds.) Harman, G., & Thomson, J. J. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 65–154.

Toure-Tillery, M., & Fishbach, A. (2011). The course of motivation. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21, 414–423.

Toure-Tillery, M., & Fishbach, A. (2014). How to measure motivation: a guide for the experimental social psychologist. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 8, 328–341.

van Roojen, M. (2002). Humean and anti-Humean internalism about moral judgments. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 65, 26–49.

van Roojen, M. (2010). Moral rationalism and rationalist amoralism. *Ethics*, 120, 495–525.

Wallace, R. J. (2006). Moral motivation. In *Contemporary debates in moral theory*, (ed.) Dreier, J. Oxford: Blackwell. 182–195.

Wedgwood, R. (2007). *The nature of normativity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zangwill, N. (2008). The indifference argument. *Philosophical Studies*, 138, 91–124.

1. Pay special attention to the phrase ‘and so on’ at the end of the list. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I take it to be equally paradoxical to assert a third-person, present-tense sentence, such as ‘Jones sincerely judges that he should φ in circumstances *C*, but he does not assent to the content of his own judgement’. It seems to me that the only unproblematic type of sentence would be the one in which the speaker describes someone else’s moral stance, which she finds utterly unacceptable; e.g. ‘Jones sincerely judges that he should φ in circumstances *C*, but I find this completely unacceptable’. Yet, although this sentence is uncontroversial, it is also completely irrelevant to the question of whether unconditional motivational internalism represents a correct account of moral motivation. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. I follow Cholbi (2009) in treating Moore’s paradox as an instance of epistemic self-defeat. For more details on this approach to Moore’s paradox, see also de Almeida (2001), and Adler (2002, pp. 193–98). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. I am inclined to say that Michael’s constellation of attitudes should be puzzling not only from a third-personal point of view, but also from a first-personal point of view. Namely, although Michael appears to judge that he should refrain from eating animal products, his evident motivational indifference to that judgement is to be interpreted as counterevidence to his attributing that moral judgement to himself (see Cholbi, 2009, p. 502). If my contention here is right, I suspect that this point can be used to bolster the internalist aspirations, for it seems to me that an agent who finds herself baffled or astonished by her not being moved to act in accordance with her own moral judgement is manifesting evidence of motivation at some level. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Interestingly enough, Svavarsdóttir seems to endorse this point when she remarks that motivational internalism ‘does not say that the motivation necessarily accompanying moral judgments *overrides all other motivation*. Indeed, the position is silent on the strength of the accompanying motivation, and even allows that its strength varies from agent to agent’ (1999, p. 166, emphasis added). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The direct implication of this point is that a speaker who utters a moral judgement but finds herself unmotivated by it might well be surprised to learn that she never in fact assented to that judgement in the first place. This leaves us with the question of how a speaker might be mistaken about making a sincere moral judgement. In my opinion, the most plausible answer to this question is that people often make moral judgements without really understanding the conditions for an utterance of words to constitute the *sincere* moral judgement. This lack of understanding should come as no surprise, for the boundaries of an agent’s sincerity in speech, like the boundaries of many other concepts, are somewhat loose. As such, I have to admit that any suggested list of conditions for the utterance of words to constitute the sincere making of a moral judgement will necessarily remain somewhat indefinite. (The list of these conditions will, no doubt, include that the speaker is speaking seriously, that she is not speaking ironically or uncaringly, and so forth.) Yet, however loose the boundaries may be, I take it that the *crucial* condition under which the speaker who utters the sentence ‘I sincerely judge that I should φ in circumstances *C*’ can correctly be said to have made a sincere moral judgement is that she *assents* to the content of this judgement. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Some internalists argue that an agent who is completely unmoved to act in accordance with her own moral judgements does not actually make bona fide moral judgements, but rather moral judgements in the inverted commas sense. These internalists argue that this must be so, based on the linguistic fact that ‘moral judgement’, properly understood, simply means ‘a judgement that is necessarily accompanied by the relevant motivation’. (See e.g. Hare, 1952, pp. 124–6, 163–5. For useful and interesting comments, see e.g. Bromwich, 2016.) However, this way of arguing strikes me as completely unconvincing, since it assumes the truth of motivational internalism and, thus, begs the question against externalists. On the other hand, my point that the conjunction of conditions (a) and (c) is epistemically inconsistent with the condition (b) follows directly from the truth of P1 and P2, the justification of which is completely independent of the truth of motivational internalism. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)