

## An Analysis and Critique of the Argument from Direction of Fit for the Humean Theory of Motivation

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### Abstract

The Humean theory of motivation is remarkably attractive in virtue of its ability to explain intentional actions. The theory accounts for an agent's intentional actions in terms of a previous desire of hers and a belief concerning how to fulfil the desire. The Humean theory of motivation can be formulated as follows: an agent, A, is motivated to do an action  $\Phi$  only if, and only because, A has a previous desire for  $\Psi$  and a belief that by doing  $\Phi$  the previous desire for  $\Psi$  will be satisfied. According to this formulation, having a desire-belief pair as characterized above is not only a necessary condition, but also a cause, of being motivated. The argument from direction of fit is an important argument for the Humean theory of motivation. On this argument, the fundamental distinguishing feature of beliefs and desires is their directions of fit; that is, if there is a mismatch between the world and a belief, then the belief should change in order to match the world, while if there is a mismatch between the world and a desire, then it is the world that should change in order to match the desire. The paper seeks to provide Michael Smith's version of the argument from direction of fit in favor of the Humean theory, explicating the worries and objections to it.

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### Keywords

Direction of fit, the Humean theory of motivation, motivating reason, evaluative beliefs, truth-sensitivity.

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