

# Argument Analysis #2

PHI 375/SPM 375

Due September 12, 2013

Please write approximately 2 pages stating, in your own words, the argument contained in the following passage and critically analyzing it. (N.B. Smith makes several points in the passage that are not directly related to the overall argument. Focus on the argument for the main conclusion, which is stated at the beginning and at the end.)

I doubt that there is any support to be found for the Humean theory in a causal conception of reason explanations. In order to see this we only need ask why a causal conception should be thought to support especially the Humean theory. To be sure, one who holds that reason explanations are causal must conceive of some psychological states as possessed of causal force. But why, as McDowell seems to assume, must he think that desires are the only psychological state possessed of causal force? Why mightn't he think instead that only certain beliefs are possessed of causal force? McDowell offers no argument on this point.

Indeed, when we consider the reason causal theorists actually give for holding a causal conception, it emerges that no such argument is forthcoming. For they reason roughly as follows: 'We ordinarily say of agents that they  $q$  because they have reason to  $\phi$ . The "because" here may uncontroversially be regarded as the "because" of rationalization; or, better, the "because" of teleological explanation. But now observe that an agent may have reason to  $\phi$  and  $\phi$ , and yet not  $\phi$  because he has reason to  $\phi$ . What then is the feature that makes the difference between this case and the case in which the agent  $\phi$ s because he has reason to  $\phi$ ? The only illuminating answer available is that the reasons in the second case cause the agent to  $\phi$ . It thus emerges that the argument causal theorists give for a causal conception of reason explanations makes no substantial assumption about the nature of the reasons we have. So, it seems, we should be able to accept or reject this argument quite independently of our views concerning the nature of reasons. The upshot is that if Humeans and non-Humeans alike may have a causal conception of reason explanations then it cannot be that holding a causal conception supports especially the Humean theory. *Smith, "The Humean Theory of Motivation" pgs. 43-4*

You should first reconstruct the argument in the passage. Make clear what you take the conclusion of the argument to be, and what you take the premises to be, both explicit and suppressed, by setting them off from surrounding text and labeling each premise and the conclusion. Premises and conclusions should not be quotes; they should be stated in your own words. They should not be questions. It is best to do this both in prose and in standard form. Below is an example of an argument in standard form (but you needn't have only two premises).

Premise 1: Every claim with a truth-value is either analytic or empirically verifiable.

Premise 2: No moral claim is either analytic or empirically verifiable.

Conclusion: No moral claim has a truth-value.

Explicit premises are premises the author explicitly states; suppressed premises are premises that he or she is assuming to be true without explicitly stating.

Next, critically analyze the argument. What is the best objection to the argument? Is it to one of the premises? Is the argument valid? Ultimately, can the argument be successfully defended against the objection?