

IN PRAISE OF AKRASIA?

Akrasia involves acting contrary to one's all-things-considered judgment. It is therefore a clear case of irrationality, since akratic agents are irrational even by their own lights: they judge that they should act other than as they do. Despite this irrationality, akratic actions are free and intentional actions. In other words, though they are irrational, they are done for reasons. As such, they are actions for which agents can be responsible.¹ In moral contexts, to be responsible is to be subject to assessment of praise and blame. Praise and blame are themselves conceptually connected; to be open to one is to be, in principle, open to both. Akrasia, however, seems different. Since it represents a failure of practical reason, it appears as if akratic actions can never be praised.

But is this right? Can akratics never merit praise, regardless of how they act? Akratics are standardly represented, in moral contexts at least, as knowing how they ought to act, and yet being led astray by their desires. So Aristotle describes akrasia as

¹ This is the standard view of akrasia. It is not universally shared, however. Perhaps the earliest philosophical discussion of akrasia is in Plato's *Protagoras*, where Socrates argues, in effect, that akrasia is impossible, since no one ever knowingly chooses to do wrong. All apparent cases of akrasia are in fact cases of weakness. Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. C.C.W. Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). For a different sceptical argument, which does not dispute the existence of akrasia but does question the distinction between (blameworthy) akrasia and (blameless) compulsion, see Gary Watson, 'Skepticism About Weakness of Will', *Agency and Answerability* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 33-58. Watson does not reject the distinction altogether, but he does argue that it is more "relativistic" than the standard view allows.

“similar to vice in its actions”² and the akratic as “someone who because of his feelings abandons himself against correct reason.”³ Davidson, however, perceptively notes that akrasia is not primarily a problem for moral philosophy, but for the philosophy of action.⁴ It seems at least possible that akrasia could also be ‘similar to virtue in its actions,’ and for an akratic agent to ‘abandon himself against incorrect reason’ because of his feelings. The question, then, is twofold. First, is such “inverse akrasia” possible?⁵ Second, if it is possible, can it be praiseworthy?

I. Inverse akrasia would require doing a morally right action while displaying the same pattern of practical reasoning as standard akrasia. It may be that this is impossible: perhaps akrasia precludes the possibility of right action. But unless morally right actions are simply *defined* in such a way so as to rule out akrasia, this seems implausible. Akratic agents act for reasons, even if they are irrational in so doing. So even if it is insisted that morally right actions are those done for a certain narrow range of reasons, it remains possible that inverse akratic agents act for those reasons, albeit while reasoning akratically.

Another suggestion is that apparent inverse akrasia does not represent a failure of rationality, since it would involve doing the morally right action, which is always the

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (2nd edn.; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999). 1151a6.

³ Ibid. 1151a21.

⁴ Donald Davidson, 'How Is Weakness of the Will Possible?' *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001) at Note 14.

⁵ The term “inverse akrasia” was first used to describe such cases in Nomy Arpaly, 'On Acting Rationally against One's Best Judgment', *Ethics*, 11:2000), 488-513.

rational action, and so cannot be irrational. This appears to be Aristotle's strategy.⁶ As we shall see, there is some truth to this second claim, but as it stands, it will not do. First, since akrasia is a problem of practical reason, it should be able to persist regardless of the moral stakes. Second, the source of the problem is not that the akratic agent acts in a way that a rational advisor would deem irrational, but that he acts in a way that *he himself* deems irrational, and this conflict between what he judges he should do and what he in fact does can be present regardless of whether he acts as an ideally rational advisor would recommend. If inverse akrasia can be praiseworthy, it will be so *despite* displaying an important rational defect.

The most common example of inverse akrasia in the literature is Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. Huck is an uneducated boy from antebellum Missouri with many of the values and beliefs common to that place. He does not question the moral justifiability of slavery, and he believes that slaves should be treated as property. During the course of Twain's story, Huck befriends Jim, a slave, and helps him escape. This action goes against Huck's strong belief that he ought to turn Jim in, since, as a slave, Jim is someone's lawful property. On two separate occasions, however, Huck is faced with an opportunity to turn Jim in, and on both occasions, he finds that he cannot, despite his belief that it would be the right thing to do. This causes him to feel intense regret; he berates himself for aiding in what he considers to be "theft," and believes that he has a

⁶ Aristotle mentions Neoptolemus, from Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, who cannot bring himself to tell a lie, despite being ordered to do so by Odysseus. Though Philoctetes' pain at lying prevents him from acting as he believed he ought to, Aristotle denies that he is akratic: "not everyone who does something because of pleasure is... incontinent, but only someone who does it because of a shameful pleasure." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. 1151b24. This denial obscures the similarity between inverse and standard akratics, since both act contrary to their own judgment.

duty to return Jim to Miss Watson, Jim's owner. Far from believing that he acted rightly, his conviction that he has repeatedly acted both weakly and badly convinces him that he is destined to remain a "bad boy."

If Twain's description of Huck's psychology is coherent, then it seems as if something very much like inverse akrasia is possible. Huck displays a failure of practical reasoning similar to standard akrasia: he acts contrary to his beliefs about how he should act. Moreover, in freeing Jim from the bondage of slavery, his actions are at least in accord with the right action. Twain clearly intends for the reader to admire Huck, but literary theory teaches us that we are not bound by the author's intention; though Huck has acted in a morally desirable way, he might not merit any praise for his actions.

Jonathan Bennett, who first raised the case of Huck in this context, argues that Huck acts on the basis of what he calls "sympathy," which is distinct from moral judgment.⁷ Huck firmly believes that, in helping Jim escape, he has acted immorally—as Bennett points out, Huck's belief that freeing Jim is wrong is so firm that Huck does not seem to consider *any* reasons at all for rejecting it. He sees his actions as weak, and as evidence that he is a very bad boy, beyond redeeming. Bennett concludes that Huck's acts merely on the basis of an "unreasoned emotional pull."⁸ If assessments of praise and blame are only appropriate for actions that are done for a reason, then it seems that praise

⁷ Bennett claims "*feelings* must not be confused with *moral judgments*." The former "is not a judgment about what I ought to do but just a *feeling*." Jonathan Bennett, 'The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn', *Philosophy*, 49: 1974), 123-34 at 124. Emphasis in original.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 127.

cannot be appropriate in cases like Huck's. He may, like standard akratics, deserve blame for his failure or rationality, but he cannot merit praise.⁹

Bennett clearly lays out the problem with seeing the actions of inverse akratics as praiseworthy. Their actions do not seem to reflect their beliefs about how they ought to act, which makes their doing the right act appear accidental. We might be glad that Jim has been freed, but this need not commit us to praising Huck any more than it would commit us to praising Miss Watson for allowing Jim to escape by forgetting to lock his door.

II. The first challenge in showing that inverse akrasia can be praiseworthy is to show that Huck acted for a reason other than mere weakness. He may *also* be weak, but if he merits praise, then there should be a reason, other than cowardice, for his actions. Several writers have made such an argument. Nomy Arpaly, for example, argues that Huck has undergone an unconscious "perceptual shift," and that he in fact believes that Jim does not deserve to be enslaved; he just does not know that he believes this, because his belief is unconscious.¹⁰

⁹ Bennett makes his view clear by comparing Huck to Heinrich Himmler, who apparently suffered the occasional pangs of sympathy for the victims of his death camps. The difference between Huck and Himmler, says Bennett, is simply that, in the struggle between unreasoned sympathy and bad morality, the victory went to sympathy in Huck's case, and bad morality in Himmler's. That Huck lacked the courage of his convictions is fortunate, but it is hardly something for which he should be praised. With a bit more strength of will, Bennett suggests, Huck would be just like Himmler. *Ibid.* p. 128.

¹⁰ Nomy Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Chapter 2. Julia Driver offers a different account: Huck is praiseworthy for helping Jim escape because he acts from virtue. For Driver, this means that he acts from a trait that reliably produces good and significant social benefits. So Huck's praiseworthiness is independent of his reasons for action or his rationality: on Driver's this view, it could be his weakness or his squeamishness that constitutes his virtue. Aristotelians would of course reject this

Arpaly, along with a small number of other theorists, including Robert Audi and Alison McIntyre, takes Huck's praiseworthiness to demonstrate the more general point that "*sometimes an agent is more rational for acting against her best judgment than she would be if she acted in accordance with her best judgment.*"¹¹ Audi argues that akratic actions can be rational because rationality should be understood holistically: the rational action is the one that is favoured by the balance of reasons that the agent has. Since we are imperfect deliberators, there is difference between the balance of reasons we have and the judgements we make on the basis of our reasons.¹²

This line of argument draws attention to an important distinction between an agent's beliefs about what he has most reason to do and what he in fact has most reason to do. An agent's belief about what he has most reason to do can be mistaken.¹³ Huck does not simply have more reason to free Jim than to turn him in from an objective or

account of virtue. Julia Driver, 'The Virtues and Human Nature', in Roger Crisp (ed.), *How Should One Live? Essays on the Virtues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 111-30.

¹¹ Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue* at 36., emphasis in original. Harry Frankfurt makes a similar point: "Whatever Hume says, to regard the destruction of the whole world as less important than a scratched finger is not a rational option. *It is lunatic.*" Harry Frankfurt, 'Rationality and the Unthinkable', *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 177-90 at 185. It is sometimes claimed, narrowly, that irrationality requires inconsistency between beliefs, or between belief and action. Speaking more broadly, however, we often say that there are some beliefs or preferences that are *themselves* irrational. For an account of the distinction between narrow and wide irrationality, as well as an argument in favour of the narrow account, see T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998) at 25-30. As we shall see, if Huck had turned Jim in he would *still* have faced charges of inconsistency between his actions and (some of) his beliefs

¹² Robert Audi, 'Weakness of Will and Rational Action', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 68(1990), 270-81. ¹² Alison McIntyre makes a similar point: "what actually moves us may... be evidence about what we could be moved to understand and justify through further reflection." Alison McIntyre, 'Is Akratic Action Always Irrational?' in Owen Flanagan and A.O. Rorty (eds.), *Identity, Character, Morality: Essays in Moral Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 380-400., at 399

¹³ This is true even if we interpret the agent's reasons internally. For an extended argument, see McIntyre.

external perspective; given the whole of his beliefs, desires, and values, he has more reason *by his own lights*. So in helping Jim escape, he does what he has most reason to do, even if his deliberative failure prevents him from seeing this.

In freeing Jim, Huck displays an inconsistency between his beliefs and his actions, and this is one form of irrationality. But if he were to turn Jim in, he would be acting in the basis of deeply mistaken and unjustifiable beliefs, and these beliefs are *also* subject to rational criticism. Arpaly, Audi and McIntyre argue that this would represent an even more serious failure of rationality than the one he does display.

The general view that inverse akratics can be rational, and therefore praiseworthy, is compelling. Each of the existing arguments for this view, however, is flawed in some important way. Arpaly's argument, for example, relies heavily on the notion of unconscious beliefs and desires. This appeal to the unconscious is unhelpful: since the notion of "unconscious judgments" requires just as much explanation as "rational and praiseworthy akrasia", appealing to the former does not straightforwardly explain the latter. What is required is an explanation of structure of the inverse akratic's practical reasoning, which requires more than an appeal to unconscious beliefs.

How, then, to explain inverse akrasia like Huck's in a way that leaves room for praise? The first time Huck decides to turn Jim in, two things Jim says turn him back. As Huck is paddling toward the bank, Jim calls Huck 'the best friend he has ever had.' This remark "takes the tuck" out of Huck. Next, Jim calls Huck 'the only white gentleman to

ever keep a promise to him.’¹⁴ At this, Huck feels sick, and his resolve weakens so much that he turns back, despite his continued belief that he ought to turn Jim in.

Bennett is right that Huck acts from emotion. But the fact that it is these particular comments that give rise to Huck’s emotional reactions is significant. Why should an appeal to the value of friendship and the importance of loyalty and promises be described as, or give rise to “unreasoned emotional pulls”? Seeing someone as a friend, and understanding the value of friendship, involves a whole host of beliefs, judgments, and patterns of reasoning that are not properly described as “unreasoned.”

Huck does respond emotionally to Jim’s appeal, but his responses are not unreasoned: they depend on Huck’s having particular beliefs about Jim, about friends, and about promises. They are, in other words, reasons-responsive. It is only if Huck believes that friendship is valuable, that Jim is a friend, that promises are worth keeping, and that Jim is someone to whom promises can be made, that Jim’s comments can have any emotional effect on Huck. Otherwise, why would Jim’s comments give rise to any emotional response at all, let alone weaken Huck’s resolve?

The fact that Huck acts on the basis of his emotional reactions as opposed to his conscious beliefs does not disqualify him from praise: we standardly praise people for their emotions and other attitudes, even though attitudes are generally not voluntary.¹⁵ Moreover, Huck’s emotions and attitudes are rationally grounded: they depend on his having a series of beliefs about Jim, friendship, promises, and loyalty. Though they are

¹⁴ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New York: William Morrow, 1994). Chapter 16.

¹⁵ For an excellent discussion of responsibility for attitudes, see Angela Smith, 'Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life', *Ethics*, 115: 2005), 236-71. See also Joseph Raz, *Engaging Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), particularly Chapter 1.

rationally grounded and connected to beliefs, however, Huck's emotions are not themselves beliefs. They have an evaluative and affective component that standard beliefs lack, and they are motivating in a way that beliefs are not.¹⁶ Huck's reasons for action, then, are his emotional responses to Jim's appeal: the pleasures he takes in friendship, the shame he feels at the thought of breaking a promise. Huck may act on the basis of emotional pulls, but his actions are nevertheless rationally grounded.

Huck, and by extension inverse akratics, clearly acts for good reasons. To that extent, he is rational. Showing that his reasons are good ones, however, does not remove the accusation of akrasia, since Huck does not *see* his reasons as good ones. He may act for good reasons, but he still seems irrational from his own point of view. It therefore remains to be seen if his actions can be praiseworthy, or if akrasia disqualifies him from praise.

III. Standard akrasia involves intentionally acting contrary to an all-things-considered judgement. Since akratic agents intentionally and freely act in ways they believe to be unsupported by the balance of reasons, they are irrational *from their own point of view*. So far, I have been defending claims that, since there is a difference between what an

¹⁶ This account obviously presupposes a modest cognitivism about the emotions, according to which emotions have a cognitive or judgmental component. See, for example, Patricia Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons: An Inquiry into Emotional Justification* (London: Routledge, 1988), Ronald De Sousa, 'Emotional Truth', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society: Supplementary Volume*, 76: 2002), 247-63. The account is modest because it only presumes that some emotional reactions, like Huck's, have an important cognitive component, and does not require that *all* emotions share this feature, or that judgments are *constitutive* of emotions. As such, it does not fall afoul of the sorts of objections to cognitivism raised in, for example, Jenefer Robinson, 'Startle', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 92: 1995), 53-74.

agent believes he has most reason to do and what he *in fact* has most reason to do, it is possible for akratic agents to act rationally in spite of their akrasia.

This is a radical argument, since it rejects a central assumption of the standard account of akrasia, which is that akrasia is necessarily irrational. Despite the force of this challenge, however, the versions advanced by Audi and McIntyre's concede too much to the standard view, since both accept that cases of inverse akrasia such as Huck's are properly described as actions contrary to the agent's better judgment.¹⁷ This may be an accurate description of some cases, but it is not at all clear that agents like Huck actually *do* act contrary to their judgment. They certainly act contrary to their *beliefs* about how they ought to act, but there can be an important difference between what they believe and what they ultimately judge they have most reason to do.

In fact, inverse akrasia is importantly different from the standard case. If Huck were just like the standard akratic, we would say that, on the basis of his beliefs about slavery and property, he formed the all-things-considered judgment that he should turn Jim in, but that his desire for Jim's freedom leads him to act akratically. If that were the correct description, Huck's behaviour would be irrational in just the same way as the standard akratic's, and the puzzle would be to explain how he could merit praise for irrationally acting against his better judgment.

¹⁷ For Audi, akratic actions can be rational when it accords with an agent's "overall grounds of rationality better than does a practical judgment it contravenes." Audi, 'Weakness of Will and Rational Action', at 279. McIntyre speaks in similar terms, saying for example that "akratic action may not be irrational if the agent is motivated by some consideration that could also have led her to revise the reasoning that led to her practical conclusion." Here, 'practical conclusion' carries the same meaning as 'practical judgment, and McIntyre is arguing that inverse akratic agents do *not* revise their conclusion prior to acting, despite having good reason to do so. McIntyre, 'Is Akratic Action Always Irrational?' at 390.

This description, however, gives far too much weight to Huck's conscious beliefs about slavery, and not nearly enough to his emotional evaluations. Huck certainly *believes* that slaves are property, that Jim is a slave, and that taking property is stealing. But why should we associate Huck's judgment with these beliefs? After all, beliefs are just one intentional state or attitude among many. Huck's emotional evaluations of Jim, his affective responses to Jim's appeal, and his intentional actions in helping Jim escape all suggest that Huck *in fact* judges that he should help Jim escape rather than turn him in. He may not be able to articulate this judgment, and it might not fit with his beliefs, but that only shows that there is more to judgment than belief.

It is easy to assume, from the standard phrase 'an all-things-considered judgment', that normal intentional actions are the result of an agent's deliberations about the normative force of all of his beliefs.¹⁸ But most intentional actions are not the result of such careful deliberation. In fact, it is at best misleading to say that Huck's 'all-things-considered judgment' was that he should turn Jim in. As Bennett points out, Huck failed to consider *any* reasons for helping Jim escape when he was deliberating about what to do, so he certainly did not consider *all* his relevant beliefs. Rather, he considered only his beliefs about slavery and property. It was only when he was faced with the prospect of actually turning Jim in that all of the considerations in favour of helping Jim entered his mind in any way. It was in light of these considerations that Huck acted, even though

¹⁸ Both Audi and McIntyre primarily argue that akratics can act rationally even when the judgment they act against was the product of deliberation and reflection. This is no doubt true, and makes for a more powerful argument, but it also concedes (if only for the sake of argument) that deliberation and reflection are the norm for intentional actions. This concession should be resisted.

none of these considerations was entertained as a belief or entered into his conscious deliberations.

If this is right, then Huck need not act contrary to his all-things-considered judgment. Rather, being faced with the actual prospect of turning Jim in gives rise to emotions that reveal his true judgment: he in fact judges that he should *not* turn Jim in, despite his beliefs to the contrary. Such cases make the potential difference between belief and judgment clear. To discover a moral incapacity in the way the Huck does is to discover that one is *mistaken* in one's beliefs about one's judgment.

Though belief and judgment are not the same intentional states, they are closely connected. Beliefs serve as the basis for judgments, and judgments can be expressed as beliefs: in standard cases, someone who *judges* that she should do *x* will also *believe* that she has most reason to do *x*. Huck's judgment and (some of) his beliefs are in conflict, but his judgment cannot be wholly separated from his beliefs. If it is his decisive judgment that he should help free Jim, he must have some beliefs that support and reflect this judgment. As indeed he does: Huck believes that Jim is his friend, that friendship is important, and that promises should be kept. Huck would likely assent to each of these beliefs, if asked. So his judgment that he should help Jim is not completely divorced from his beliefs, and indeed reflects some of those beliefs.

Huck's case is particularly difficult, however, because he continues to have mistaken beliefs about his judgment even after he acts. His is not a conversion experience: his beliefs, judgement, and actions remain in conflict, and so he experiences his actions as weakness rather than as change of conviction. So Huck continues to display an important rational failure. The problem is not that there is no connection between his

beliefs and his judgment, since that would call into question his judgment as well as his beliefs. Rather, the source of his irrationality is that he does not focus his attention on the right beliefs. He cannot see how his beliefs about friendship are relevant, and how his beliefs about slavery and property are *not*. So even after he acts on his judgment that he should help Jim escape, he cannot *see* what he has done in this way. His beliefs about slavery get in the way. As a result, Huck feels the anguish of regret: he cannot avoid the belief that he has acted immorally, since he cannot get rid of the belief that slaves are property. But this is a criticism of the rationality of Huck's system of beliefs, which he has not brought into order: it is not primarily a criticism of the rationality of his judgment or his action. His beliefs about friendship and promises are connected to his emotional reaction to the situation, and this reaction is the source of his judgment.

Huck's failure is related to, but different from, standard akrasia. In standard cases, the akratic agent's *actions* are irrational, since they are out of line with his judgment. In inverse cases like Huck's, however, the akratic agent's *beliefs*, not his actions, are irrational, since it is his beliefs that are in conflict with his judgments. If this is right, then there is no problem in assigning praise to the actions of inverse akratic agents such as Huck. Their actions are rational; it is their beliefs that are irrational.¹⁹

¹⁹ Inverse akrasia is obviously related to akratic *belief*, or where an agent "believes against his better epistemic judgment." John Heil, 'Doxastic Incontinence', *Mind*, 93: 1984), 56-70. The two are not identical, however. For one thing, it is not quite accurate to say that Huck "believes against his better epistemic judgment" that slaves are property — the judgment to which his belief is opposed is not, in the main, an epistemic one. Even if akratic belief is expanded to include non-epistemic judgments (as suggested in Alfred Mele, *Irrationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Chapter 8) it is not clear that it accurately describes Huck. Huck's problem is that he sees this belief as relevant to how he should act, not simply that he believes it.

This is an important difference: unlike standard akratics, inverse akratics do not *act* irrationally, since they do not act against their better judgment. Perhaps the difference is too important for both cases to be described as akratic. Important similarities remain, however. Both are *subjectively* irrational in the same way. Since both inverse and standard akratics have conflicts between belief, judgment, and action, both *experience* their actions as irrational, as not reflecting their beliefs about what they should do. As a result, both experience the regret characteristic of akrasia. The difference is that inverse akratics have made a judgement about how they ought to act on the basis of their (rationally grounded) emotional reactions, and this judgment corresponds with their actions. From the inside, we might say, standard akrasia and inverse akrasia are difficult to distinguish. It is only from the outside—and only then imperfectly—that we can assess the connection between the agent’s judgments, beliefs, and actions, in order to determine whether it is the agent’s *action* or his *beliefs* that are out of line and are therefore irrational.

One upshot of this argument is that beliefs are not the only relevant consideration in the assessment of a moral outlook. We sometimes get a much better handle on the rationality of a moral outlook by considering emotional reactions, and the judgments that flow from them, than we do by considering moral beliefs. Moral knowledge, in other words, is not to be found exclusively in belief, but is potentially spread throughout the entire network of beliefs, emotions, evaluations, desires, judgments, and other intentional attitudes.

There is something potentially liberating about this claim, since strict correctness of moral belief is not a precondition of a rationally defensible moral outlook. In fact,

one's moral outlook can be, like Huck's, admirable in many respects despite the presence of deeply mistaken beliefs. Disputes about the correctness of moral beliefs need not entail disputes about the correctness of a moral outlook more broadly. Similar emotions and judgments can be compatible with a wide range of moral beliefs, and so the devoutly religious and the firmly secular can share many moral judgments even if they do *not* share many moral beliefs.

Despite having deeply mistaken beliefs, and despite level of irrationality similar to akrasia, Huck, and inverse akratics like him, acts rationally, and is praiseworthy for doing so. It is important to recognize, however, that Huck would be *more* rational and *more* praiseworthy if his beliefs, emotions, judgements, and actions were in harmony. Now, one objection to this claim is that Huck's psychic harmony should be irrelevant to his moral worth. It would certainly be better *for Huck* if his beliefs, emotions, judgments, intentions, actions, and so on were all aligned, but why should we suppose that it is relevant to our level of praise?

The answer, in part, is that Huck's actions, while minimally rational, would have been more rational with a tighter connection between his beliefs and his judgment. Huck's judgment that he should help Jim is based in part on the beliefs that ground his emotions: his beliefs that Jim is a friend, friends should be helped, promises should be kept, and so on. But Huck's judgment, while praiseworthy, is still contingent in worrisome ways. Though friendship and promises are good reasons for helping Jim, the fact that they are Huck's only reasons means that he may have felt perfectly at ease in at turning in a stranger. Huck would be even *more* praiseworthy if his judgment was based, not simply on the thought that *Jim* ought to be freed, but that *all* slaves deserved the

same. And it is precisely his mistaken beliefs that block him from being able to make this judgement. So while Huck acts for good reasons, his lack of psychic harmony means that he could be significantly more praiseworthy than he already is.

Inverse akratics such as Huck are certainly less than perfectly rational, but then so are most of us, most of the time. It is possible to be *less than perfectly rational* without being completely *irrational*. Likewise, to be less than fully virtuous is not the same as being vicious. Huck would certainly be a better person if he had better beliefs. But if the only way our actions can be rational and, in moral contexts, merit praise, is if we have full knowledge and no false beliefs, then few of us ever manage to be either rational or praiseworthy. Fortunately, imperfect agents, even some akratics, can be rational and merit praise despite their imperfections. There is, then, no principled asymmetry between praise and blame in the case of akrasia. Though inverse akratics still display a failure of rationality, they can merit praise as well as blame.

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