Rational Resoluteness and Intrapersonal Disagreement

**Abstract**:

There is a particular philosophical puzzle associated with rational resoluteness: how can it be rational to remain resolute, when we are liable to judge that we should be irresolute? How can one rationally retain a resolution not to smoke anymore, for example, once one genuinely judges that one should smoke (one last time)? I show how Richard Holton has attempted to resolve this puzzle in favor of rational resoluteness by arguing that our resolutions give us reasons to avoid reconsideration. After considering some problems for Holton’s account, I offer my own response to the puzzle: rational resoluteness via attending to intrapersonal disagreement––disagreement with our own past judgments. I show that this account can explain rational resoluteness in the face of judgment shift, and that it also yields dividends for Holton’s account. Finally, I sketch an argument that, *pace* Holton, we are sometimes *irrational* to act on our irresolute judgments, because the fact of our irresolute self’s disagreement with our resolute self might generate a normative defeater for our irresolute judgments."

**References**:

Bales, Adam and Toby Handfield. 2021. “Resolutions provide reasons or: ‘how the Cookie Monster quit cookies.’” *Synthese*.

Christensen, David. 2010. “Higher-Order Evidence.” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, **81**(1): pp. 185–215.

Christensen, David. 2018. “On Acting as Judge in One’s Own (Epistemic) Case.” *Proceedings and Addresses* of the American Philosophical Association, **93**(1): pp. 207-235.

Finkelstein, Claire. 2008. "Acting on an Intention." In Bruno Verbeek (ed.), *Reason and Intentions*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, pp. 67-77.

Holton, Richard. 2004. “Rational Resolve.” *The Philosophical Review*, **113**(4): pp. 507–535.