

A Refutation of Smith's Objection to Externalism

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There are two views of the relationship between moral judgment and motivation. First of all, internalism argues that the relationship between moral judgment and motivation is internal and necessary. They insist that it is a conceptual truth that if an agent judges that it is right to x in certain circumstances C , then that person is motivated to x in C , at least absent of a weakness of will.¹⁾ Externalism, on the other hand, contends that the relationship between moral judgment and motivation is external and contingent. The motivation to do x does not directly follow the judgment that doing x is right. Thus, the externalist argues that there is a person who judges that doing x is right but is not motivated to do x although he does not have a weakness of will. This type of person is an amoralist. The existence of amoralist is why some object to internalism.

As they understand the relationship between moral judgment and motivation differently, internalism and externalism explain the person with reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation

1) This type of internalism is favored by Michael Smith (1994, 61). When I use the term 'internalism' in this paper, it refers Smith's weak internalism.

differently. Smith's main argument is that externalism cannot give appropriate explanation of them, whereas internalism can, thus internalism is preferable to externalism. In this paper, I will reveal Smith's objection to externalism is not successful.

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One of my friends, S, used to really love eating meat. At that time, she judged that eating meat is permissible. However, ever since she raised a pet and became interested in animal rights issues, she believes that being vegetarian is right. Now she does not eat meat anymore. This experience that changes of motivation reliably track revisions in moral judgment shows that there is a reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation.

In *The Moral Problem*, Michael Smith suggests that there can be two explanations for the change that occurred in my friend. To begin with, internalism provides the explanation that when my friend's judgment that "Eating meat is permissible" was changed to "Being vegetarian is right," she was motivated not to eat meat directly by following from the judgment that "Being vegetarian is right." My friend, S is motivated to do X, following the below process.

S judges that being vegetarian is right.

S is motivated to be vegetarian.

On the other hand, externalism's explanation is different. According to Smith, externalists who argue that there is only a contingent relationship between moral judgment and motivation have

to assume other factors that make possible the reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation. Externalists are able to find this factor, the motivation to do the right thing whatsoever, in the character of a good and strong-willed person. Externalists can explain the reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation by suggesting the below process.

S judges that being vegetarian is right.

S is motivated to do the right thing whatsoever.

S is motivated to be vegetarian.

Both explanations show that how my friend has a reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation. While not all people will have such a reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation, at least those who are good and strong-willed will.

Smith points out that externalists' explanation, however, is problematic. He claims that when we consider common sense, the problem will be revealed.

- (1) S is a good person.
- (2) According to common sense, a good person has a non-derivative motivation to do the right thing X.
- (3) If someone has a derivative motivation to do X, then he is not a good person.
- (4) S has a derivative motivation to do X.
- (5) S is not a good person.
- (6) (1) is contradictory to (5).

At first, this argument is valid formally. Let us examine the soundness of this argument. (1) is the premise that externalists assume. (2) is the premise that Smith introduces. According to him,

we normally believe that a good person has a direct and non-derivative motivation to do X. (3) is a contraposition of (2). (4) can be found in externalists' explanation. In their explanation, S's motivation to do X is derived from the combination of the judgment that doing X is right and the motivation to do the right thing whatsoever. Following these premises, by externalists' explanation, S cannot be a good person.

Among these premises, premise (2) is controversial. Consider a person A. A saw someone is threatened by bullies. At that moment, A was afraid to help the person. However, A decided to help the person because A believed that helping someone in trouble is right and A has a desire to do something right. According to premise (2), A is not a good person at all. However, A took a risk and saved the person. Such behavior can be praised by many people. Regarding A is not a good person is hard to accept. As a result, Smith has to prove premise (2).

Smith supports this assumption by introducing the argument of Bernard Williams. Suppose a man S who, when faced with the choice between saving his lover²⁾ or a stranger, chooses to save his lover. Williams argues that in this circumstance, if S loves his lover, he will save his lover following the single thought that the drowning person is his lover. If S requires another thought in addition to the thought that the drowning person is his lover, he does not have

2) I modify this example by following a comment of Harry Frankfurt. He mentioned that even though the man is a good person, it is possible for him to do not save his wife following the single thought that "the drowning person is my wife." Suppose his wife has recently tried to murder him. Specifying nothing more than a mere legal relationship between the man and the drowning woman misses the point. For this reason, Frankfurt suggested that the man in the example loves one of the two people who are drawing. Harry Frankfurt (2004), *The Reasons of Love*, Princeton University Press, pp.36-37.

direct concern and love for his lover. For instance, someone who judges that the drowning person is his lover, and then judges that in this situation saving one's lover is permissible and then saves his lover, is not a person who loves his lover. In this case, the man is considered as having 'one thought too many.'

Based on Williams's argument, Smith contends that "just as it is constitutive of being a good lover that you have direct concern for the person you love, so it is constitutive of being a morally good person that you have direct concern for what you think is right." (Smith, 76) When Smith mentions "direct concern," he means the concern which directly follows from a judgment.

This example of the drowning lover tells us why S cannot be regarded as a good person in externalists' illustration. In their explanation, S has the motive to do X because of the combination of the following: the judgment that doing X is right and the motivation to do the right thing whatsoever. However, if he requires another factor, whether it be another motive or judgment in order to be motivated to do X, he is not a good person as he is considered to have 'one thought too many.'

As a result, externalists cannot explain the reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation in a good and strong-willed person in that in their explanation, S is not a good person. Internalists, on the other hand, are able to provide a good explanation. In their explanation, S is motivated to do X directly following from the judgment that doing X is right, and thus, S can be regarded as a good person. It reveals that only internalism can explain the reliable connection between a moral judgment and motivation in good person. For this reason, internalism is more preferable than externalism.

However, Smith's argument objection to externalism is refutable. In his argument, the premise (2) "According to common sense, a good person has a non-derivative motivations to do the right thing

X.” entirely depends on William’s argument. Williams’s argument, however, is problematic. If we revise Williams’s argument, and then applying it to the smith’s argument, the person in explanation of internalism is not a good person.

To begin with, I will reveal that Williams’s description of the good lover S’s behavior is inaccurate. Williams argues that if S loves his lover, he will save her after the single thought that the drowning person is his lover. However, according to Harry Frankfurt, S in Williams’s description does not love his lover. The reason is that except in the situation that at first S did not recognize his lover, S should not need to have the thought that the drowning person is his lover. In this modified description of S, we can define direct concern as “concern without thinking.”

Some may insist that saving one’s drowning lover without thinking is impossible. At least S can save his lover when he knows that the drowning person is his lover. If S did not know that the drowning person was his lover, he could not save his lover at all.

This objection assumes that “concern without thinking” is identified as “concern without knowledge.” However, “concern without thinking” is different from “concern without knowledge.” In the case of the drowning lover, S recognized the drowning person as his lover, but he was just not explicitly conscious of the thought “the drowning person is my lover.”

This modified description of the drowning lover case raises a problem in Smith’s argument. When we accept that direct concern means “concern without thinking,” we can argue that Smith’s internalism falls into contradiction as well and thus, internalism cannot provide an explanation of the reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation as is shown below.

- (1) S is a good person.
- (2) A good person has direct concern for X.
- (3) If someone does not have direct concern for X, he is not a good person.
- (4) "Concern without thinking" is direct concern.
- (5) S is making a moral judgment.
- (6) S does not have concern for X without thinking.
- (7) S does not have direct concern for X.
- (8) S is not a good person.
- (9) (1) is contradictory to (8).

This argument is valid. If this argument is sound as well, Smith's internalism will fall into contradiction. Let us examine the soundness of this argument. Smith accepts (1). Smith accepts (2) as well. In this premise, the concept of "direct concern" is changed following the modified explanation of the case of the drowning lover. (3) is the contraposition of (2). According to the modified explanation of the drowning lover case, (4) is true. (5) can be found in Smith's explanation. S concerns X with the thought that "Doing X is right." Premise (6) follows from (4) and (5). Thus, according to Smith's internalism, S is not a good person.

As a result, Smith's objection to externalism fails. If he succeeds in refuting externalism, his internalism will be refuted by following the same logic that he used to refute externalism. S does not have direct concern for x but only has derivative concern. His motivation to do x is derived from his judgment that doing x is right. In this situation, according to internalists, S has 'one thought too many as well'.³⁾

3) Alexander Miller (1996) also contends that Smith fails to show that internalism gives a better explanation for the reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation in a good person. Stratton-Lake (1998) disagrees with Miller's argument in his article.

In his later paper, Smith redescribes someone who judges that it is right to *x* in *C*, then he is motivated to *x* in *C*, at least absent of the weakness of the will by introducing the distinction of instrumental/non-instrumental instead of the distinction of derivatives/non-derivatives. This person is called a moralist.

Externalism's account of a moralist:

- (1) A has a non-instrumental desire to do what is right.
- (2) A has a means-end belief that she can do what is right by doing *x*.
- (3) A has an *instrumental* desire to do *x*.

Internalism's account of a moralist:

- (1) A judges that doing *x* is right.
- (2) A has a *non-instrumental* desire to do *x*.

The most distinctive difference between the externalist's explanation and the internalist's explanation of a moralist is that in the internalist's view, A has a non-instrumental desire to do *x*, whereas in the externalists view, A has an instrumental desire to do *x*. The reason A in the externalist's explanation has an instrumental desire is that she desires to do *x* as a means of achieving the right thing to do. Instrumental desires follow from a desire and means-end belief that she can accomplish *b* by doing *a*.

This re-description of the externalist's explanation and the internalist's explanation of a moralist through the distinction is

effective to defend Smith's objection to externalism given my previous criticism.

His former argument is as follows. In the internalist's explanation, once a good and strong-willed person judges that doing *x* is right, he has a non-derivative concern about *x*, whereas the person as an externalism has only a derivative of concern for *x*. However, good person does not have a derivative motivation but has non-derivative motivation to do *x*. For this reason, the person in the externalist description is not a good person. I pointed out that according to Smith's argument, however, the person described in the internalism explanation cannot be a good person as well, as he also has derivative motivation to do *x*. He thought too many. His motivation to do *x* is also derived from his judgment that doing *x* is right.

However, leaving out the derivative/non-derivative distinction, Smith successfully rebutted my former objection to his argument. In the internalists' explanation, the motivation to do *x* is derivative and non-instrumental. On the other hand, in the externalist's explanation, the motivation to do *x* is not only derivative but also instrumental. However, Smith argues that having an instrumental desire to do *x* while having the desire to do the right thing as the primary motivation to do the right thing is problematic.

To begin with, the externalist's explanation that the moralist has an instrumental desire to do *x* is arguable, as it is radically different from our ordinary view of a moralist. Suppose someone who judged that utilitarianism is right and was earlier motivated to maximize everyone's happiness and reduce suffering. However, now he newly judges that giving an extra benefit to his family and friends is proper and is motivated to do this. In this case, it is common to consider that his motivation to provide extra benefit to those close to him is not a means to achieve something else. He is simply motivated to take care of those close to him. Indeed, we believe that

he has a non-instrumental desire to care for those close to him more.

In contrast, the externalist's explanation is radically different. According to the externalist's view, the moralist had an instrumental desire to maximize everyone's happiness and reduce suffering and now he has an instrumental desire to care for those close to him. This perspective is wholly different from our ordinary view of a moralist. For this reason, the externalist's explanation is objectionable.

However, Smith's argument has two problems.⁴⁾ First, it is difficult to understand why we have to consider the ordinary perspective of a moralist. From the start, we defined the concept of a moralist. If an agent judges it right to *x* in *C* and that agent is a moralist, then she is motivated to *x* in *C*, at least absent a weakness of will, for instance (1996, 176). The moralist in the externalist's explanation fits this concept.

Moreover, introducing the ordinary view of a moralist makes the internalist's explanation of a moralist also unconvincing. As Smith intends, let us accept the common idea that a moralist has a non-instrumental desire to do *x*. If we accept this idea, the internalist's moralist cannot be a moralist as well. Suppose someone, *A*, believes that caring for his family is right. He is motivated to feed his baby. His psychological process would be as follows:

- (1) *A* judges that caring for his family is right.
- (2) *A* has a desire to care for his family.
- (3) *A* has a means-end belief that he is able to care for his family by feeding his baby.

4) In *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics*, Miller argues that even though Smith considers the distinction of instrumental/non-instrumental instead of the distinction of derivatives/non-derivatives in his argument, he fails to suggest a compelling argument for the internalist. see pp. 226-227.

(4) A has a desire to feed his baby.

According to internalism, in sentence (2), the desire is non-instrumental. He desires to care for his family because he thinks that it is right. However, let us focus on desire in sentence (4). This desire is instrumental. The reason A desires to feed his baby is because he wants to care for his family. Indeed, his desire to feed his baby is used as a means to achieve a greater end, in this case, caring for his family. If we accept the idea that the moralist does not have an instrumental desire to do x, A in the internalist's explanation is also not a moralist.

However, Smith argues that not only having an instrumental desire but also having a desire to do the right thing as a primary source of motivation is the main reason to refute externalism. His criticism of externalism is that externalist's account of a moralist is a radically departure from our common view of moral perfection. Moreover, it makes the concept of moral perfection implausible.

- (1) According to externalism, everyone is a moralist or an amoralist.
- (2) A morally perfect person is a moralist.
- (3) We usually think that a morally perfect person is moved by the very features of their acts which make them right.
- (4) In the externalist's explanation, a morally perfect person is moved because their act is right and because they desire to do the right thing rather than by the features of his act which make it right.
- (5) In the externalist's explanation, a morally perfect person is radically different from our view of a morally perfect person.
- (6) The explanation by externalism of a moralist is objectionable.⁵⁾

5) In order to get this conclusion, there should be a hidden premise that the idea

Let us examine the soundness of this argument. The first premise is the externalist's representative claim. Externalists argue that there is a person who judges that doing *x* is right but is not motivated to do *x* although he does not have a weakness in will. This kind of person is called amoralist. The existence of amoralist is a reason for refusing internalism's claim that it is a conceptual truth that if an agent judges that it is right to *x* in certain circumstance *C*, then that person is motivated to *x* in *C*, at least absent a weakness of will. Externalists claim that everyone is either a moralist or an amoralist.

The second premise is acceptable. If there is a morally perfect person, he would be a moralist. The third assumption is Smith's claim. According to Smith, we normally believe that a morally perfect person is moved by the features of his behavior which make it right. For instance, suppose someone cares for his family. When he cares for his family, he is moved by the fact that the act serves his family's wellbeing. Related to this presumption, however, Smith does not provide an definition of morally perfection and why a morally perfect person is moved by the feature which makes their action right. For this reason, when Smith suggests his fifth premise, he is begging the question. Before he argues that a morally perfect person is different from our view of a morally perfect person, he should define morally perfect first. However, in this argument, his only states: "This [doing *x* by right-making features] is part of what makes them morally perfect: morally perfect people are moved by right-making features."(1996, 182) However, without providing enough of reasons to accept this assumption, Smith's argument is

which is radically different from our common view is objectionable. This premise is controversial. There are many convincing philosophical views which depart from our ordinary perspectives, such as Graham Priest's claim that contradiction can be truth. However, I would like to show the problems of Smith's argument, accepting this hidden premise.

thus begging the question.

Furthermore, the fact that Smith does not clarify the concept of moral perfection is a threat to premise 5 in a different way as well. To insist this, I would like to clarify the concept of moral perfection first and then reveal that a moralist from an externalist's viewpoint fits the concept of moral perfection.

When we think of someone as perfect, the person does not commit mistakes or suffer faults or failures. If someone is morally perfect, the person does not commit any mistakes or experience faults or failure when he does something morally right. To do this, not only his moral judgment is right but also his executive competence has no problems. Indeed, a morally perfect person has correct moral judgment, and he is motivated while following his moral judgment without any problems such as weakness of will. The moralist in externalism can be this type of person. Owing to this desire to do the right thing, if he does not suffer weakness of will, once he judges that doing *x* is right, he willingly does *x*. That way, he can be a person who does what he believes right.

However, Smith argues that having the desire to do the right thing endows this person with a moral fetish instead of making him a morally perfect person. For this reason, the concept of moral perfection becomes implausible. Someone who has a moral fetish cannot be a morally perfect person.

However, Smith's claim that the person described by externalism is a person with a moral fetish is objectionable. When we mention that someone has fetish, he get enjoy from some particular object. Suppose someone has a stocking fetish and there are stockings in front of him. He gets joy from the stockings regardless of the stockings' material, design or color. In this way, the morally perfect person, according to externalism, does the right thing regardless of what the right thing is. He concentrates on the fact that the act is

right instead of merely the act. As with the person with a stocking fetish, who focuses on the fact that it is stockings rather than an object, the person described by externalism is concerned with the fact that the act is right rather than merely the act. For this reason, the person in the externalist's description is similar to someone with a fetish.

There is a crucial difference between a person with a fetish and the person in the externalist's explanation, however. In the case of a person with a fetish, he pursues a specific object in order to obtain pleasure. However, the person described by the externalism viewpoint does not engage in the proper act in order to get pleasure. He simply does the right thing because it is right and he desires to do the right thing. He is not moved by an expectation of satisfaction or pleasure. Indeed, his final end is totally different. Owing to this difference, the person in the externalism viewpoint is not identical to a person with a fetish.

Lastly, having a desire to do something right plays a crucial role in becoming a morally perfect person. A morally perfect person behaves following this correct moral judgment. However, as a human, it is difficult to be such a person. Suppose I believe that caring for those close to me is right. Sometimes, however, I set aside my concern for them temporarily. In this situation, if I know that some act serves their wellbeing, I do not care about this or I do not want to do it. Having a desire to do the right thing is helpful to overcome this type of situation.⁶⁾ Although I can forsake those close to me, sometimes and I have no concern for the fact that some acts contribute to their happiness, I am able to do the right thing, because it is right and I hope to do the right thing. This way, we can be a person who can do the right thing follow our

6) I borrow this idea from Lillehammer's paper (1997).

moral judgment.

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In this paper, I try to reveal that Smith's objection to externalism is not successful. He objects to externalism because this view provides a derivative of the desire to do the right thing for good and strong-willed people. However, the person described by internalism also has a derivative of the desire to do the right thing because their desire derives from their moral judgment. Although he introduces the instrumental/non-instrumental distinction instead of the derivative/non-derivative distinction, this switch is still problematic. Although Smith argues that the person described by externalism cannot be a moralist owing to his instrumental desire, person described by internalism also cannot be a moralist for the same reason. Furthermore, the desire to do the right thing helps us to be a morally perfect person. For these reasons, Smith's objection to externalism is not persuasive.

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