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An Externalist Solution to the "Moral Problem"

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In his recent book, *The Moral Problem* (Basil Blackwell, 1994), Michael Smith presents a number of arguments designed to expose the difficulties with so-called 'externalist' theories of motivation. This essay endeavors to defend externalism from Smith's attacks. I attempt three tasks in the essay. First, I try to clarify and reformulate Smith's distinction between internalism and externalism. Second, I formulate two of Smith's arguments—what I call the 'reliability argument' and 'the rationalist argument'—and attempt to show that these arguments fail to damage externalism. Third, I undertake to expose and question some of the motivations that drive internalism.

Our moral experience suggests that there is some sort of tight connection between a person's judging that some action is, say, just, compassionate or right and that person's being motivated to take that action. But how can purely cognitive states such as judgments be so tightly linked to motivating states? Aren't motivating states typically, at least in part, *conative* states? The attempt to reconcile what might be called the representative and practical functions of moral judgment lies at the core of what Michael Smith terms "the moral problem".¹ Put more precisely, the moral problem forms an apparent *aporia* of the following form:

- (1) Moral judgments of the form 'It is right that I Φ ' express a subject's beliefs about an objective matter of fact, a fact about what is right for her to do.
- (2) If someone judges that it is right that she Φ , then, *ceteris paribus*, she is motivated to Φ .
- (3) An agent is motivated to act in a certain way just in case she has an appropriate desire and a means-end belief, where belief and desire are, in Hume's terms, distinct existences (p. 12).

¹ Cf. Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Basil Blackwell, 1994); p. 12. I shall henceforth incorporate all page references to this text in the body of the paper.

As Smith glosses (2), (2) says that there is some sort of necessary connection between judgments and motivations. But if we combine (2) and (3) it seems to follow that:

- (4) There is some sort of necessary connection between the distinct existences of moral belief and desire.

But (4) appears to be nonsense. To say that beliefs and desires are distinct existences is to claim that they are contingently connected.

Now how might we attempt to solve this puzzle? Non-cognitivists reject (1), the moral cognitivist position. Externalists bid farewell to (2), or the internalist theory of motivation. Anti-Humeans repudiate the Humean theory of motivation found in (3). Smith deems none of these solutions particularly attractive; each premise enjoys a good deal more intuitive support than its denial. Not only does each premise have more plausibility than its correlative denial, every putative solution suffers from crippling shortcomings. In Smith's words, non-cognitivist, externalist and anti-Humean positions are all *bad* solutions to the moral problem (p. 15).²

My concern is with the externalist denial of (2). Smith maintains that any externalist position which attempts to deny (2) faces at least two serious obstacles. For one, an externalist theory of motivation cannot supply an adequate account of the reliable connection between moral judgment and moral motivation. Call this the internalist's 'reliability argument'. Moreover, the externalist has difficulty explaining why we expect rational agents to do what they are morally required to do. Term this the internalist's 'rationalist argument'. I shall contend that neither of these arguments damage externalism.

This essay divides into three sections. In the first part, I attempt to articulate in some detail the distinctions between internalism and externalism on

which Smith has his eye. Once these distinctions are in hand, I turn, in the second section, to examine and ultimately reject Smith's two objections to externalism. Finally, in the third section, I endeavor to lay bare and question some of the motivations that fuel internalism.

I. Internalism vs. Externalism: locating the issues

Anyone familiar with recent work in the theory of motivation knows that those positions labeled 'internalist' are bewilderingly diverse and often incompatible. Indeed, within the first three chapters of *The Moral Problem* alone one can pick out at least three different internalist positions—three different internalist positions which Smith means to defend and yet which go undistinguished. This multiplicity of internalist positions poses something of a problem for the interpreter of *The Moral Problem*. For which, if any, of these three positions is Smith's *considered* position?

Smith, I judge, does have a considered core internalist position. Let's call that position *Internalism*. Perhaps it is best to think of *Internalism* as being comprised of three distinct claims. The first claim of *Internalism* is the *modal claim* that moral judgments are, *ceteris paribus*, necessarily linked to motivations (p. 12). More specifically, Smith intimates that it is by virtue of the nature of a moral judgment that moral judgments are *conceptually* tied to motivations (pp. 61, 72). So, the sort of necessary connection that holds between moral judgment and moral motivation is a conceptual one. Smith, moreover, specifies the *nature* of the conceptual connection that holds between moral judgments and motivations. That is to say—and this is the second claim—Smith stakes out a position with respect to the *etiology of moral motivation*. Smith's internalist account of the etiology of motivation says that according to cognitivists, the propositional content of S's judgment that Φ ing is right *gives rise* to or *produces* the motivation to Φ , while according to non-cognitivists, S's judgment that Φ ing is right is *identical* with her motivation to Φ (p. 72).³ So far, then, there are two components of *Internalism*; but there is another piece. In addition to the modal claim and the claim concerning the etiology of motivation, Smith attaches to *Internalism* a thesis concerning *practical rationality*. This third feature of *Internalism* informs us that in every case in which S judges that Φ ing is right and S fails to be motivated to Φ , S is practically irrational (p. 61). Though Smith never

² Smith's project is to argue that given a certain account of the concept of rightness we can establish that (1), (2) and (3) are "consistent and true" (p. 184). Contrary to what Smith indicates, however, one need not make any substantive commitments about anything to solve his formulation of the "moral problem". Why not? Because propositions (2) and (3) do not contradict each other. Smith takes the distinct existences clause of (3) to mean that beliefs and desires can be modally separated (p. 7). But (2) has a *ceteris paribus* clause which concedes that beliefs and motivations, and hence, beliefs and desires, can come apart. It follows that there is no contradiction between (2) and (3): both propositions allow for beliefs and desires to be modally separated. To have a genuine moral problem on our hands in which (2) and (3) contradict each other, (2) would have to be read as: (2*) Necessarily, if S judges that it is right that she Φ , then S is motivated to Φ . Smith, however, explicitly rejects this reading of internalism (p. 61).

It might be asked why we should offer an externalist "solution" to a specious problem. The answer is that many philosophers have thought the internalist/externalist controversy to have interest apart from its role in Smith's particular formulation of the "moral problem". Cf., for example, David Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), chap. 3 and Jonathan Dancy, *Moral Reasons* (Blackwell, 1993).

³ The cognitivist's construal of the motivational etiology claim is most naturally read as the claim that the content of our moral judgments *cause* motivations (Cf. *The Moral Problem*, p. 73). If this is right, a cognitivist internalist like Smith must make sense of how the connection between moral judgment and motivation is at once conceptually necessary and causal. I should also note that while in some places Smith claims that moral judgments produce or are identical with *motivations* (p. 72), in others he claims that moral judgments produce or are identical with non-derivative *desires* (p. 73). Though I suspect this ambivalence on Smith's part is important, I have couched my discussion in terms of *motivations* because that is what Smith usually does.

specifies exactly how he is thinking of this generic brand of practical rationality, he takes weakness of will, apathy, listlessness and the like to be paradigm forms of practical irrationality (pp. 61, 120).

Internalism is thus a package of these three theses. Let's now make a qualification. Smith clearly has no interest in defending a non-cognitivist version of *Internalism*.⁴ Therefore, in what follows I will take *Internalism* to refer to a *cognitivist* version of *Internalism*. Put a bit more formally, Smith's favored version of *Internalism* says something like this:

Necessarily, (i) if S judges that Φ ing is right in circumstances C and S is motivated to Φ in C, then it is the content of S's judgment that Φ ing is right in C itself that produces S's motivation to Φ in C, and (ii) if S fails to be motivated by her judgment that Φ ing is right in C, then S is practically irrational.⁵

We can read the first clause of our schema as expressing a conceptual truth which captures both *Internalism's* modal claim and the claim concerning motivational etiology. The second clause articulates *Internalism's* practical rationality thesis.

Externalism, by contrast, is the denial of *Internalism*, or more accurately, the denial of each of the three elements which comprise *Internalism*.⁶ According to Smith, *Externalism* denies the modal claim by rejecting *Internalism's* thesis that there is some sort of necessary conceptual connection between moral judgment and moral motivation. The relation between moral judgment and moral motivation, according to *Externalism*, is conceptually contingent (p. 71). On the heels of this rejection of the modal claim follows the denial of *Internalism's* account of motivational etiology. Rather than claim that moral judgments *by themselves* are sufficient to produce moral motivations (or are identical with motivations), *Externalism* holds that moral motivation depends, at least in part, upon factors which are *external* to moral judgments themselves (p. 72). For a given moral judgment to motivate a particular agent, that judgment must "hook up" in the right fashion with the appropriate motivational dispositions of that agent (e.g., that agent's desires, concerns, valuings, etc.). Finally, *Externalism* takes issue with *Internalism's* practical rationality requirement (p. 71). According to *Externalism*, it's conceptually possible that not all failures of moral motivation count as failures of practical rationality. That is to say, the advocate of *Externalism*

countenances the conceptual possibility of such persons as amoralists, i.e., agents who judge various types actions to be right, fail to be motivated to do those actions and suffer from no form of weakness of will or the like.⁷

Why Internalism is Smith's considered view

If the account offered so far is correct, *Internalism* represents the view which Smith means to defend and *Externalism* the position which he wishes to deny. It should be admitted, however, that *Internalism* is not the core internalist position which Smith explicitly *claims* he is defending. Smith explicitly claims to solve the "moral problem" by defending two other broadly internalist views. So before we move forward to consider Smith's two arguments against *Externalism*, perhaps a word should be said in defense of my rendering of Smith's considered, core internalist position.

At the outset of *The Moral Problem*, we are told that proposition (2) of the original "moral problem", or,

(2) If someone judges that it is right that she Φ , then, *ceteris paribus*, she is motivated to Φ

is the internalist view that Smith shall concern himself to defend. Later it is claimed that the "practicality requirement on moral judgment", or,

(PR) If S judges that it is right for her to Φ in circumstances C, then either she is motivated to Φ in C or she is practically irrational

is the core internalist position Smith wishes to champion (p. 61). Pretty clearly, neither *Internalism*, (2) nor (PR) are identical with each other. (2) merely states the modal claim contained in *Internalism*. (PR), according to Smith, tells us that, necessarily, if an agent judges that some action, Φ ing, is right, that agent is motivated to Φ absent some lapse of weakness of will or the like (p. 61). (PR), then, states *Internalism's* modal claim and practical rationality claim.

⁴ Cf. Smith's attack on non-cognitivism in chapter 2 of *The Moral Problem*.

⁵ Smith does not indicate whether he takes *Internalism* to be a thesis concerning *moral obligations* or *morally permissible* actions. Nor does he say to what *degree* an agent is motivated upon judging an action is right. Though these questions are important, I will largely ignore them.

⁶ Smith distinguishes between a number of externalist positions. I mean by *Externalism* what Smith calls "strong externalism". Cf. *The Moral Problem*, pp. 63, 72.

⁷ Smith sometimes appears to attribute a stronger thesis to *Externalism*, viz., that no failure of moral motivation is a failure of rationality. Smith writes that according to *Externalism*, it is a "rationally optional matter whether some agent who believes that it is right to act in a certain way is motivated to act accordingly" (p. 71) and that moral motivation is a "wholly contingent and rationally optional extra" (p. 74). There are two problems with this construal of *Externalism*. First, Smith claims that *Externalism* "amounts to a denial" of the "practicality requirement on moral judgment" (p. 63). But the denial of the 'practicality requirement' merely entails that it is conceptually possible that there exists an agent who judges that an action is right and is not motivated to take that action and is not practically irrational. Second, I doubt that any of our contemporary externalists would recognize this construal of their position as accurately reflecting their own. For instance, one of our most prominent contemporary externalists, David Brink, merely argues that it is *conceptually possible* that an amoralist is not irrational. Cf. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*, chap. 3.

The differences between these various formulations of internalism are not entirely innocent. Here is why. First, suppose we ignore the difference between (2) and (PR). Suppose, that is, we claim that (2) is identical to (PR) because the *ceteris paribus* clause in (2) refers to failures of practical rationality. If we grant this identity between (2) and (PR), it remains the case that *Internalism* and (PR) are different positions. *Internalism* contains a claim about the etiology of moral motivation while (PR) does not. Smith, interestingly enough, conducts the bulk of his discussion as a defense of (PR). Indeed, Smith's reliability argument, the very linchpin of his argument against *Externalism*, purports to establish (PR) by maintaining that *Internalism's* motivational etiology claim (and modal claim) cannot plausibly be denied (p. 71). That is to say, Smith's reliability argument purports to establish that we cannot plausibly deny that it is conceptually necessary that the content of a moral judgment itself produces moral motivation. But notice that (PR) says nothing about issues of motivational etiology, nothing whatsoever about whether the content of a moral judgment itself produces moral motivation. Moreover, it is obvious that (PR) entails nothing concerning motivational etiology.⁸ It follows that the reliability argument, even if successful, cannot support, let alone establish, (PR). Furthermore, it follows that the success of the reliability argument is irrelevant to solving Smith's own formulation of the "moral problem". So, if Smith's reliability argument is to support his core internalist position, and hence, solve the "moral problem" as he formulates it, his core internalist position cannot be (PR). Rather, it must be *Internalism*.

Let's not drop the matter here but follow up on this last point. Suppose Smith concedes that the reliability argument does not support (PR). And suppose he agrees that since the reliability argument supports *Internalism*, we should claim that *Internalism* best represents his considered, core position. It is by no means evident, however, that Smith's reliability argument entails *Internalism*. The problem is that the reliability argument attempts to establish *Internalism* by claiming that one cannot plausibly deny *Internalism's* motivational etiology claim (and modal claim). But even if Smith's argument can establish this, it's not evident how the argument could establish that all failures of moral motivation are failures of practical rationality rather than, say, mere failures of moral character. It appears, then, that we need an additional argument to defend *Internalism's* practical rationality claim.

I have maintained that the reliability argument entails neither (PR) nor *Internalism*. It is perhaps worth noting one important conclusion which the above line of argument suggests: though the three claims which comprise

⁸ Even if (PR) did entail the internalist's motivational etiology claim, it would be fallacious to argue that since (PR) entails the internalist's motivational etiology claim, and since the reliability argument entails the internalist's motivational etiology claim, therefore the reliability argument entails (PR).

Internalism may (in some sense) comfortably fit together and have interesting interconnections, none of the three claims entail each other. The same can be said of *Externalism*. So, in principle, there is a whole battery of positions from which to choose that blend various externalist elements with other internalist features. In section II, I shall maintain that this laxity between the various elements that comprise Smith's considered internalist view produces considerable difficulties for Smith's 'rationalist argument'.

Let me close with a final comment concerning how the arguments of this section bear upon Smith's construal of the internalism/externalism controversy. Smith clearly believes that internalism is the more intuitively attractive position. But once we realize that the internalist position Smith must defend is *Internalism*, and not merely (2) or (PR), one cannot help but wonder why Smith thinks this internalist position so intuitively plausible and its externalist denial any less intuitively plausible. That it is conceptually necessary that moral motivation is produced by the content of a moral judgment itself and that all failures of moral motivation are failures of practical rationality is hardly a truism! I shall return to this consideration in the last section.

II. The Case Against Externalism

The Reliability Argument

So much for the preliminaries. As already suggested, Smith claims to spy a deep flaw in *Externalism's* account of motivational etiology. For consider, says Smith, a person who is good and strong-willed. That is to say, consider a person who is such that she has the virtue of being reliably disposed appropriately to conform her motivations to her moral beliefs.⁹ It goes without saying that in this type of reliably motivated person a *change in motivation* follows reliably in the wake of a *change in moral judgment* (p. 71). For instance, suppose Sarah is a reliably motivated person who also happens to support the libertarian party. Suppose, furthermore, that Sarah supports the libertarians because she firmly believes that libertarian policy fosters the virtue of "independence" in persons, e.g., that libertarian policy helps ensure that persons are "self-made", "rely on their own industry", "pave their own way in this world" and "don't take handouts". But imagine that upon discussing libertarian policies with a social democrat friend, Sarah becomes convinced that she ought not to support libertarian social policy. Sarah thus

⁹ In a recent article, Smith makes it clear that he means the predicate 'good' here to refer to the "executive virtue" possessed by persons who are "disposed to conform their motivations to their moral beliefs in a reliable way, at least absent weakness of will and the like." Cf. "The argument for internalism: reply to Miller", *Analysis*, 56.3, July 1996, p. 177. Though I shall follow Smith's intended use of the term, a closer look at the text of *The Moral Problem* reveals that Smith also uses the term "good" to mean *virtuous*. Cf. especially Smith's *reductio* of *Externalism* on p. 75.

judges that supporting the libertarians is wrong. And let us imagine that Sarah does not come to believe that supporting the libertarians is wrong because she discovers that libertarian policy does not in actuality support the making of independent persons. Rather, Sarah comes to believe that her valuing the trait of independence, and hence, her supporting the libertarian party is fundamentally mistaken. So, Sarah experiences a *conversion* of sorts—a conversion with respect to what she fundamentally values. If all this takes place, one would expect that Sarah's motivational patterns will change. Sarah will cease to support the libertarian party, she will no longer encourage others to vote for the party, and so on.

Let's call Smith's observation that changes in moral judgment are reliably correlated, at least in reliably motivated people, with changes in moral motivation, the *correlation thesis*. Now how can *Externalism* explain the correlation thesis? Specifically, how can *Externalism* explain the *reliability* of this connection between Sarah's change in moral judgment and her change in motivation? *Internalism*, says Smith, has no difficulty here. *Internalism* claims that there is a special type of conceptual connection between moral judgment and motivation. Once again, the defender of *Internalism* will claim that moral motivation is *internally connected* with moral judgment. Motivation is occasioned directly by the content of moral judgments themselves (p. 72). It follows that a change in moral judgment will yield, *ceteris paribus*, a change in moral motivation. *Externalism*, by contrast, denies this type of necessary and unmediated connection between moral judgment and motivation. *Externalism* claims that moral judgment and moral motivation are *externally connected*. It must be the case that a moral belief is "channeled through" or somehow "mediated" by the motivational dispositions of the reliably motivated agent. But what kind of motivational dispositions, what kind of desires, could explain the phenomenon that a change in moral judgment reliably yields an appropriate change in moral motivation in the reliably motivated and strong-willed person?

Here is Smith's answer. *Externalism*, says Smith,

will insist that what explains the reliable connection between judgment and motivation is a motivational disposition I have in virtue of which I count as a good person. In other words, what explains the reliability of the connection is the *content of my moral motivation* (p. 73).

In Sarah's case, the task is to uncover some motivational disposition whose content explains *both* why Sarah was motivated to support the libertarians when she judged it was right to support the libertarians and why Sarah ceases to be motivated to support the libertarians when she judges that it is right to stop supporting them (p. 74). Well, suppose we try to explain Sarah's initial motivation to support the libertarians by appealing to some non-derivative concern of Sarah's to promote libertarian values. Clearly, however, Sarah does not count as a reliably motivated person because she has *that* concern. In

fact, as a consequence of her conversation with her friend, Sarah judges she ought not to value the virtue of independence. Nor could the having of this concern explain why Sarah is no longer motivated to support the libertarians when she judges it is wrong to do so. But what other motivational content might turn the trick for *Externalism*? Smith does not consider any other contenders. Rather, Smith concludes that the *only* desire that could provide the right sort of reliable connection between Sarah's judgments and her motivations is the moral motivation *to do the right thing*, where the content of this desire is read *de dicto* and not *de re* (p. 74). That is to say, if we are to think of Sarah as being reliably disposed to conform her motivations to her moral judgments, it must be the case that Sarah is motivated to fulfill or satisfy some one overarching *principle*, namely, "to do the right thing." Other desires with a more specific moral content are derived from the content of this one desire.

If this is correct, *Externalism* has an explanation for the reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation in the reliably motivated person. In every case in which a reliably motivated agent is motivated to act appropriately upon judging some action to be right, we can posit a *de dicto* desire to do the right thing from which this motivation is derived. But if this is what *Externalism* must say, we have a ready *reductio* of the view on our hands. Smith puts the argument like this. The advocate of *Externalism* claims that

...the good person is, at bottom, motivated to do what is right, where this is read *de dicto* and not *de re*, and that is really a quite implausible claim. For commonsense tells us that if good people judge it right to be honest, or right to care for their children and friends and fellows, or right for people to get what they deserve, then they care non-derivatively about these things. Good people care non-derivatively about honesty, their fellows, people getting what they deserve, justice, equality, and the like, not just one thing: doing what they believe to be right, where this is read *de dicto* and not *de re*. Indeed commonsense tells us that being so motivated is a fetish or moral vice, not the one and only moral virtue (p. 75).

The argument is perplexing – in large part because it is difficult to discern what exactly the argument is. So, let's begin by attempting to better understand the position which Smith attributes to the advocate of *Externalism*. In the first passage quoted above, Smith claims that *Externalism* will explain the reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation by appealing to some motivational disposition in virtue of which a person's motivations reliably conform to her moral judgments. There are, I submit, two ways to read this passage. The weaker reading has *Externalism* claiming that

If S is a reliably motivated person, then there is some motivational disposition in virtue of which S counts as a reliably motivated person and whose content explains why S is reliably motivated to Φ at t when S judges that it is right that she Φ at t.

But if we interpret *Externalism* in this weak fashion, it is unclear how the rest of the argument could go. This weak reading merely says that the content of *some* motivational disposition or other in virtue of which S counts as a reliably motivated person explains why S is reliably motivated to Φ when she judges that Φ ing is right. Compatible with this weak reading is the following scenario: one type of motivational content in virtue of which Sarah's motivations reliably conform to her moral judgments explains (at least in part) why Sarah initially votes libertarian. A second type of motivational content in virtue of which Sarah's motivations reliably conform to her moral judgments explains (at least in part) why Sarah is motivated to stop voting libertarian. So, this weak reading will not support what Smith clearly believes is required, namely, that *the very same motivational content* explain why Sarah is motivated to support the libertarians when she judges it is right to support the libertarians and why Sarah is motivated to stop supporting the libertarians when she judges it is wrong to do so (p. 74). And if we have no reason to suppose that we must appeal to some single motivational content in Sarah's particular case, it is hard to see why the advocate of *Externalism* must appeal to some lone *de dicto* desire to do what is right to explain the reliable connection between the totality of Sarah's moral judgments and motivations. And once we have no reason to believe that a *de dicto* desire to do what is right is necessary to explain the reliable connection between Sarah's various moral judgments and moral motivations, we have no reason to believe that such a desire is necessary to explain the reliable connection between the various moral judgments and moral motivations of a reliably motivated person.

We are forced, then, to the more robust, and might I add, more natural reading of the first quoted passage. Smith means *Externalism* to hold that

There is some single motivational disposition in virtue of which S counts as a reliably motivated person and whose content explains the reliable connection between S's moral judgments and motivations *simpliciter*.

Given this premise, we can trace the form of the argument. We must explain Sarah's initial motivation to support the libertarians and her subsequent motivation to cease supporting them by appealing to a single motivational content. A *de dicto* desire to do the right thing seems the only candidate in Sarah's case. Indeed, this desire seems the only type of motivational disposition whose content can explain why there is a reliable connection between the moral motivations and the moral judgments of the reliably motivated person. Now suppose we add two more assumptions. Suppose we assume that there are morally virtuous people and that all morally virtuous people are reliably motivated agents. If we make these assumptions, the advocate of *Externalism*

is committed to claiming that morally virtuous persons are ultimately motivated by a "moral fetish", *viz.*, a *de dicto* desire to "do the right thing" (p. 128). But this is exceedingly implausible. Genuinely virtuous persons care non-derivatively about honesty, the well-being of their fellows, justice, and so forth. Hence, *Externalism* is false.

The argument is unconvincing. For beginners, it is difficult to discern why Smith thinks that a *de dicto* desire to do what is right is the *only* motivational content that can explain Sarah's change in motivation. It would not require an extraordinary leap of imagination to construct an alternative explanation according to which Sarah's initial motivation to support the libertarians and her subsequent motivation to stop supporting them are grounded in, say, a benevolent desire to promote human flourishing. But the argument suffers from a more glaring difficulty. The difficulty is that Smith clearly assumes that the advocate of *Externalism* must claim that if S is a reliably motivated person, then there is some *single* motivational disposition in virtue of which S counts as a reliably motivated person, and whose content explains why in every case in which S judges an action to be right, S is reliably motivated to take that action. But the advocate of *Externalism*—or so I shall argue—need assume nothing of the sort.

Begin by considering that class of reliably motivated persons who are also *genuinely* virtuous persons. And let's say that (in the most general of terms) a genuinely virtuous person is the sort of person who possesses a rich repertoire of the virtues in a unified manner. For our purposes, it is perhaps best to think of the concept of a virtue in terms of the concept of a *concern*—where a concern is a summary term which denotes desires, aversions, attachments, interests, cares and the like. The claim, then, is that each virtue is constituted by a different type of concern. The virtuous person who possesses the virtues of benevolence, justice, compassion, generosity, humility, honesty, etc., possesses the correlative concerns to bring it about that others flourish and prosper, to treat others fairly, to give freely and liberally, to aid those who suffer, not to think too highly of herself, to be truthful, etc. Various concerns will ordinarily be entrenched to different degrees in what Bernard Williams calls a person's motivational set. And concerns with a more coarse-grained content will ground various other motivations with more specific content. In any event, it is typically because a virtuous agent possesses these concerns that she perceives morally salient features of the world and is "properly affected" in Aristotle's sense.¹⁰ And most importantly for our

¹⁰ If Robert Roberts is correct, perceiving or construing features of the world in terms of a concern just is to be in an emotional state. Emotions are *concern-based construals*. Cf. "What an Emotion Is—A Sketch", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. XCVII, No. 2, April. Externalists might claim, then, that some motivational states are constituted by emotions. I should emphasize that I do not claim that the externalist must say that a person (virtuous

purposes, the virtuous person is motivated by these concerns to successfully bring about various morally good states of affairs.

Suppose, then, we think of a virtuous person along these lines. And suppose we do not follow Smith's own practice of working exclusively with 'thin' ethical concepts. Imagine, instead, that virtuous persons do not merely judge actions *to be right* but often judge them to be kind, generous, honorable, and the like. If we make these moves, there will be no temptation to explain the reliable connection between moral judgment and motivation in virtuous persons by appealing to some *de dicto* desire to do what is right. *Externalism* can offer a much more thick and nuanced account of the reliable correlation between moral judgment and moral motivation in the genuinely virtuous person. The story is quite straightforward. The virtuous person possesses a whole constellation of virtues, and hence, a whole pack of correlative concerns. Thus, when some strong-willed virtuous agent judges that one or another action is morally obligatory, helpful, compassionate, etc., that virtuous person is typically motivated to some appropriate degree or other to take that action because she typically possesses the requisite concerns with which the content of that judgment can combine in the right fashion.¹¹

We have, then, the makings of an externalist account of why virtuous persons are reliably motivated to act appropriately when they judge certain actions to have some positive moral status. We must, however, make one final move if we are to offer a full reply to Smith's argument. Recall that Smith's initial argument against *Externalism* turned upon the correlation thesis—the thesis that a *change* in moral motivation reliably follows in the wake of a change in moral judgment. More precisely, Smith's argument challenged *Externalism* to explain the phenomenon that when some reliably motivated person at some time judges that Φ ing is right, and is motivated to Φ , that agent typically ceases to be motivated to Φ when, at some later time, she judges that Φ ing is wrong. So, if *Externalism* is to explain the correlation thesis, it must explain not only why those reliably motivated agents who are genuinely virtuous agents reliably *acquire* motivations to act appropriately when they judge some action to have some positive moral status. *Externalism* must also explain why a particular type of change in moral judgment is reliably correlated with *the ceasing to have some extant moral motivation*. Of this particular phenomenon we have said nothing. Let's con-

sider how our more rich account of the virtues might account for the correlation thesis.

First, a proviso. There are, I think, at least two *wrong* ways to go about explaining the correlation thesis. For one, the advocate of *Externalism* should not fail to notice that the correlation thesis picks out a vast continuum of phenomena—from slight adjustments in moral judgment to radical upheaval of values.¹² Second, contra Smith, there is insufficient reason to believe that this disparate set of happenings admits of just one fundamental type of explanation. That is, there is insufficient reason to believe that the interplay between beliefs and concerns should be fundamentally the same in every case of the correlation thesis. The shifts in moral motivation correlated with minor changes of moral judgment may very well demand a rather different type of explanation than those correlated with moral conversions. Moreover, moral conversions themselves come in different stripes and thus may require different sorts of explanatory accounts. I propose to wade through this potentially messy business as follows. I shall return to those instances of the correlation thesis which Smith believes so troublesome for *Externalism*, namely, moral conversions. Specifically, I shall return to the case of Sarah—only now I will assume that Sarah is a reliably motivated person who is also a genuinely virtuous person. I will sketch two different types of scenarios: one according to which Sarah's motivation to support the trait of independence is *derivative* and another according to which the motivation is *non-derivative*. My conclusion is that Sarah's changes in motivation, and hence, the correlation thesis, can be nicely accommodated by *Externalism*.

i. Case One.

Suppose Sarah exemplifies the virtue of benevolence and thus has a non-derivative, deeply entrenched, but rather coarse-grained concern to promote the flourishing of others. Suppose Sarah also believes that possessing the character trait of independence is an important constituent of any flourishing life. And imagine that Sarah believes other propositions—that the trait of independence can be effectively taught, that government has a moral responsibility to promote various virtues, etc. Assuming that motivational states are belief-concern pairs, and that all goes well with Sarah's cognitive and volitional faculties, it follows that Sarah has a derivative motivation to promote the trait of independence in others. Now Sarah also holds the further belief that by supporting the libertarians she can thereby effectively promote the inculcation of the trait of independence. Suppose Sarah thus judges that

or otherwise) can perceive morally salient features of the world only if she possesses the appropriate concerns.

¹¹ I do not deny that a virtuous agent might on *some* occasions be motivated by a *de dicto* desire to do the right thing. Nor do I deny that a virtuous person's motivation to take some action may be *overdetermined* by various motivational contents (e.g., a *de dicto* concern to do the right thing, a concern to help those in need, etc.). For now, however, I will place cases of overdetermination to one side.

¹² Consequently, the correlation thesis as Smith states it—"...a *change in motivation* follows reliably in the wake of a *change in moral judgment* at least in the good and strong-willed person" (p. 71)—is probably false. One could have some slight change in moral judgment and experience no change in moral motivation.

she *ought* to vote libertarian since it will promote this mode of human flourishing. When this belief combines with Sarah's aforementioned concerns and beliefs, we reach Sarah's further motivation to support the libertarian party.

Now as the story goes, Sarah comes to believe that the character trait of independence is not constitutive of authentic human flourishing. Perhaps Sarah has been persuaded that possession of the trait of independence subtly dissolves the bonds of fellowship, friendship and sympathy that are necessary to sustain communities. But once Sarah forms this new judgment (and assuming that all her faculties are working well) her motivational chain is snipped at its base. This is because Sarah's having the motivation to promote the trait of independence in others is constituted by her believing that a person's having the trait of independence is an integral ingredient of a person's flourishing. When the content of this belief of Sarah's is *defeated*, her motivation to promote the trait of independence collapses. And since Sarah's further motivation to support the libertarians is based only upon this motivation, it too collapses. So, we have arrived at an interesting result. *Externalism* can explain the *ceasing to have a derivative motivation* by mere appeal to a change in belief.

ii. Case Two

We could say a good deal more concerning this first scenario. But now let's suppose that Sarah has a non-derivative concern to promote the trait of independence. Though Sarah may, if asked, engage in the activity of *justifying* this concern (i.e., adduce reasons in support of the appropriateness of having this concern) by contending that independence is constitutive of any good life, she need not have *derived* her concern from any other more general concern. Let's suppose, furthermore, that Sarah not only comes to believe that her non-derivative motivation is morally misguided, but that this concern is in fact morally misguided.¹³ Sarah correctly judges that helping others to become independent persons implies contributing to the dissolution of communal bonds. Up to this point, however, Sarah had failed to see the baneful consequences of her valuing the trait of independence.

Now in the case of the moral miscreant, the judgment that promoting the trait of independence dissolves community bonds might not occasion the slightest motivational ripple. Such a person might not care about communal bonds, sympathetically identifying with others, etc. But *ex hypothesi* Sarah is a virtuous person. She therefore is concerned to foster friendships and community relations, to make sure that the needy are cared for, to exemplify

¹³ We need not, of course, assume this. Perhaps Sarah does count as a virtuous person in virtue of having this concern, but she mistakenly believes this concern is morally misguided.

the virtue of sympathy, to have an integrated set of values, to be a virtuous agent, etc. Plausibly enough, these concerns imply that Sarah is concerned to *oppose* those events and states of affairs which undercut communal bonds, the well-being of the needy, the ability to sympathetically identify with others, and so on. Now suppose that Sarah becomes aware that having a concern to promote the trait of independence implies her being disposed to undercut these modes of human well-being. I submit that we can rather easily explain why this awareness should cause Sarah no longer to be motivated to promote the trait of independence in others. Here is one way to tell the story. Sarah judges that her concern to promote the trait of independence implies that she is disposed to bring about the dissolution of communal bonds, to thwart sympathetic identification, etc. But being disposed to bring about the dissolution of communal bonds and the like is incompatible with the content of her concerns to promote friendship, communal ties, sympathetic identification, societal stability, and the like. Assuming Sarah's faculties are functioning properly, the content of her judgment that promoting the trait of independence implies promoting the dissolution of communal bonds, societal stability, etc., will combine with the content of her concerns to foster communal bonds, societal stability, etc., to form a motivational state whose content is sufficient to defeat her non-derivative concern to promote independence.

By offering these explanations of Sarah's case, I do not pretend to offer any sweeping conclusions concerning how *Externalism* should explain *all* cases of moral conversion in the virtuous person. Moral conversion, like religious conversion, can be a mysterious happening. I merely conclude that *Externalism* can (a) avoid the charges of moral fetishism (b) offer a general account of why genuinely virtuous agents are typically motivated to act appropriately upon forming some moral judgment or other and (c) offer general, and plausible, types of explanations of why the correlation thesis holds with respect to virtuous persons in cases of moral conversion.

The Rationalist Argument

The advocate of *Externalism*, however, cannot rest confident since Smith has yet another argument to press against his view. This 'rationalist argument', recall, accuses *Externalism* of not being able to explain the phenomenon that we expect rational people to be motivated by their moral beliefs (p. 128). Smith believes that the rationalist argument is a "single, powerful line of argument" that "trades on the truism that we expect agents to do what they are rationally required to do" (p. 85). The argument runs as follows:

- (5) Moral requirements apply to rational agents as such.

- (6) It is a conceptual truth that if a rational agent judges that he is morally required to act in a certain way, then we expect him to act in that way.
- (7) Being rational as such must therefore suffice to ground our expectation that rational agents will do what they are morally required to do.
- (8) Therefore, our concept of a moral requirement is the concept of a categorical requirement of rationality or reason (p. 85–87).

What should we make of this argument? The argument, I think, suffers from multiple defects. But we need not go into all the details here. Sufficient for our purposes is to make clear why the argument fails as a piece of anti-externalist polemic.

The nerve of the argument is proposition (6). (6), as Smith notes, is ambiguous and can be read as stating either one of the following conceptual truths

(6[˘]) If a rational agent judges that Φ ing is right in C then we expect he *will* Φ .

or

(6[˘]) If a rational agent judges that Φ ing is right in C then we expect that he *should* Φ .

Smith believes this ambiguity to be benign. Consider (6[˘]). (6[˘]), says Smith, follows directly from the ‘practicality requirement’, i.e., (PR) (p. 86). I think there are several reasons to doubt that (PR) directly entails (6[˘]).¹⁴ Most importantly, perhaps, is that we can read the occurrence of “(practically) rational” in (6[˘]) two ways, either in a *descriptive sense*, i.e., any person who exemplifies generic capacities for practical rationality, or in a *normative sense*, i.e., any person who *deliberates in a rationally permissible or commendable manner*. If we read (6[˘]) using the descriptive sense of practically rational, (6[˘]) does not follow from (PR). (PR) does not assert that *any* agent who exemplifies capacities to deliberate rationally and who judges that an action is right is thereby motivated to do that action. Rather (PR) claims that those persons *who do not suffer from practical irrationality or who deliberate in a rationally permissible or commendable manner*, are motivated to act

¹⁴ For one, (6[˘]) is a claim about what we expect a person *will* do while (PR) is only a thesis about *motivation*. The most that would follow from (PR) is that we expect practically rational persons to be appropriately motivated upon judging an action is right, not that they will do what they judge is right. Moreover, I am puzzled why Smith thinks that (6[˘]) is a conceptual truth. I do not have any clear idea how it could be that there are conceptual truths about what we expect others to do.

appropriately upon judging an action is right. If the occurrence of “(practically) rational” in (6[˘]) refers to practical rationality in its descriptive sense, Smith needs another premise to the effect that human beings who exemplify generic capacities of practical rationality typically do not suffer from practical irrationality. Rather than saddle Smith to this rather controversial premise, I propose that we take Smith at his word that (6[˘]) follows directly from (PR) and thus interpret the occurrence of “(practically) rational” in (6[˘]) to refer to practical rationality in its *normative* sense. So, let’s read (6) as,

(6*) If S judges that Φ ing is right and S is practically rational with respect to her judging that Φ ing is right, then we expect that S will be motivated to Φ .

As it turns out, this new ‘normative’ reading of (6) will result in (7)’s being false. Why so? In short, because the occurrence of “(practically) rational” in premise (5) must refer to practical rationality in its descriptive sense (moral requirements do not merely apply to agents who deliberate well). When we combine (5) with (6*), we reach the conclusion in (7) which says that “being rational as such”, i.e., having generic capacities for practical rationality, grounds our expectation that practically rational persons, i.e., those who deliberate well, will be appropriately motivated. But *any* adult human being who does not suffer from serious cognitive malfunctions has the capacity to deliberate rationally. So, if nearly all adult human beings exhibit this property—the foolish, the pernicious, the weak, the lazy, the indifferent, etc.—we have no good reason to suppose that this common, descriptive property grounds our expectation that the *practically rational in particular* will be motivated to do what they judge is morally right. Rather, what grounds our expectation that the practically rational will be motivated by their moral judgments is that the practically rational typically deliberate *well*.

In any event, why should the advocate of *Externalism* expect that practically rational persons (in its normative sense) are typically motivated to take some action when they judge that action is right? Why, in short, should she accept (6*)? The partisan of *Externalism* must accept (6*), says Smith, because (6*) directly follows from (PR). Smith believes, moreover, on the strength of his reliability argument, that we have no alternative but to accept (PR) (p. 86). Here it will suffice to offer two quick points in response. First, our last section indicated that Smith’s reliability argument is unconvincing. It follows that we have no reason to accept (PR), and hence, no reason to accept (6*). Moreover, as witnessed in our first section, *even if* we grant that Smith’s reliability argument proves persuasive, the reliability argument will not entail (PR). Nor does it appear that the reliability argument will entail *Internalism*. Nothing about issues of modality or motivational etiology

implies conclusions about practical rationality. This leaves (PR) and *Internalism*, and thus (6*), standing, as it were, naked. Smith has failed to provide the advocate of *Externalism* with any good reason to believe (PR), *Internalism* or (6*). Nor can Smith simply assume the truth of (PR) or *Internalism*—whether these positions are true is precisely what is at issue in the debate between *Externalism* and *Internalism*.

The key premise to Smith's argument, then, is a non-starter. But perhaps Smith can respond by maintaining that since (6*) is a truism, it requires the support of neither *Internalism* nor the reliability argument. I don't believe this move remedies any problems. (6*) has no force against *Externalism* because the partisan of *Externalism* can accept (6*). Nothing about (6*) militates against the externalist view that the connection between moral judgment and motivation is conceptually contingent, nor that moral judgments themselves are insufficient to motivate agents, nor that all failures of moral motivation are not failures of practical rationality. Now the compatibility of *Externalism's* denial of the internalist's practical rationality claim with (6*) may appear a bit surprising. But it should not seem odd. *Externalism* can claim that it is conceptually possible (indeed that it is actual) that not all failures of moral motivation are failures of practical rationality and that we still expect the practically rational to be motivated to act appropriately when they judge certain actions to be right. For instance, suppose that one believes, as Philippa Foot once did, that (practically) rational actions are actions that promote a person's own purposes. And suppose one also holds that acting morally generally serves one's own purposes. Then we might expect (practically) rational persons to be motivated appropriately upon judging certain sorts of actions to be right. If this is correct, there is nothing distinctively internalist about (6*). Truism or not, (6*) is completely neutral with respect to both *Internalism* and *Externalism*.

Before we dismiss this argument altogether, we might consider one last way to salvage the intention which lies behind the argument. Smith could maintain that he has his eye on a version of *Externalism* according to which practical rationality has a very loose connection with moral motivation. According to this brand of *Externalism*, because there is no tight connection between practical rationality and morality, we do not expect the practically rational *qua* practically rational to be motivated to act accordingly when they form moral judgments. Does (6*) have force against this more extreme version of *Externalism*?¹⁵ Or more precisely, does (6*) have force against the

practical rationality component of this version of *Externalism*? Not unless we beg some significant questions against this sort of externalist. We could put the matter in the form of a dilemma. Either we interpret (6*) in such a way that we think of practical rationality in a robust, say, Kantian or Aristotelian fashion or in a weaker, perhaps, Humean fashion. If we think of practical rationality in robust terms, then (6*) appears to be a truism. But if we think of practical rationality in these robust terms, we have assumed without argument precisely what this stripe of *Externalism* denies, viz., that there is some close connection between moral motivation and practical rationality. If we think of practical rationality in weaker terms, then (6*) does not appear to be a truism. So, either we assume a highly controversial, robust conception of practical rationality and beg the question against *Externalism* or we adopt a weak version of practical rationality and (6*) is false. In either case, even this more extreme brand of *Externalism* emerges unscathed.

III. Conclusion.

Earlier in this essay, I claimed that once we explicitly spell out the considered internalist position that Smith wishes to defend, this internalist position does not appear obviously more plausible than its externalist rival. So, why does Smith believe that an externalist who rejects *Internalism* thereby repudiates an overwhelmingly plausible view? (p. 13) Pretty clearly Smith thinks that *Internalism* nicely captures two fundamental features of the moral sphere: that moral considerations have a "practical upshot" or are intrinsically "action guiding" (p. 60) and that there is some sort of intimate connection between morality and rationality (p. 62). Since *Externalism* neglects to account for both of these features, *Internalism* enjoys the upper hand. If this lays bare the motivations for accepting *Internalism*, we can raise the following questions: is it true that *Internalism* best captures the "practical pull" of morality? And is there the sort of connection between moral motivation and rationality that Smith envisages?

Consider, first, the putative practical pull of moral judgments. Motivational internalists often speak as if an adequate motivational theory must primarily account for the "motivational pull" of moral judgments.¹⁶ Hence the internalist effort to forge a conceptual link between moral judgment and moral motivation. Externalists, by contrast, remind us that there remains a darker side concerning moral motivation. Together with the morally virtuous we find the morally weak, wicked, callous, lazy, indifferent,

¹⁵ I am uncertain whether any of our contemporary externalists hold this sort of view. Brink, "A Puzzle About the Rational Authority of Morality", in *Philosophical Perspectives*, 6, *Ethics*, 1992, ed. James Tomberlin (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Company), Peter Railton, "Moral Realism", *The Philosophical Review*, XCV, No. 2, April (1986), Richard Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist" in *Essays on Moral Realism*, ed. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), and the Foot of

"Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives" and "Virtues and Vices" in *Virtues and Vices*, (University of California Press, 1978) do not commit themselves to such a strong view.

¹⁶ Cf. Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) who claims it is "a conceptual truth that to regard something as good is to feel a pull towards promoting or choosing it..." p. 188.

cynical, listless, and the like. How are we to account for such moral misfits who fail to be motivated appropriately upon forming moral judgments? The externalist answer is to sever the internalist's construal of the conceptually necessary tie between moral judgments and moral motivation. Whether a person is motivated to some degree or other to act upon the basis of her moral judgments depends upon the contingent fact that that person possesses the proper sorts of concerns, that these concerns are firmly enough entrenched and that they hook up in the right fashion with her moral judgments. (Perhaps our current debate between internalists and externalists amounts to nothing more than the recasting, in modern, secular garb, of the quarrel between Pelagians and Augustinians concerning the rectitude of the will.)

In any case, I think it safe to say that internalists have typically struggled to explain the motivational inefficacy of moral judgments. When asked to explain why moral misfits are not motivated by their judgments that certain actions are kind, merciful, generous, etc., internalists usually reply that these misfits don't *really* make these moral judgments.¹⁷ And Smith is no exception.¹⁸ My own conviction is that these internalists are explaining away the appearances. But rather than develop this argument for *Externalism*, let's briefly consider Smith's counterclaim that *Externalism* fails to account adequately for the motivational efficacy of moral judgments. Well, if the argument in section II is correct, the one argument that Smith marshals for that conclusion falls far short of the mark. A version of *Externalism* which denies this conceptually necessary link appears to offer a perfectly adequate explanation for why certain sorts of moral judgments made by particular types of people in certain types of circumstances are reliably correlated with appropriate moral motivations. I am unaware, moreover, of any good argument that a reliable connection between moral judgments and moral motivations requires positing a *conceptually necessary* connection between judgments and motivations—let alone a conceptually necessary connection such that moral judgments *themselves* occasion moral motivations. So, my conclusion is this. Since a version of *Externalism* which denies the internalist's modal and motivational etiology claims seems perfectly capable of explaining the motivational efficacy of moral judgments, it is wrongheaded to adopt *Internalism*

on the supposition that *Internalism* best explains the motivational pull of moral judgments.

That leaves us with what I identified as the second motivation for Smith's version of internalism: that *Internalism* best accounts for the tight connection between moral motivation and practical rationality. Smith articulates this second conviction by maintaining that failures of moral motivation are, one and all, rational failures. And let us keep in mind that denying the internalist account of the motivational pull of moral judgments implies no conclusions about practical rationality. Thus, the externalist can, if she wishes, espouse the internalist's practical rationality claim. But why this additional internalist proclivity to dub all failures of moral motivation rational failures? And why have externalists fought this powerful philosophical urge to brand the cowardly, vicious, nasty, foolish, selfish, insensitive and the like *irrational*?

In Smith's own case, the internalist's practical rationality claim is driven by a deep impulse toward rationalism. Since the rationalist endeavors to *reduce* moral obligations to rational ones, all failures of moral motivation are rational failures.¹⁹ But I suspect there are more modest reasons to espouse the internalist's practical rationality claim. One such reason is that a successful defense of the internalist's practical rationality claim entails that there is yet another reason to care about acting morally, namely, because it is practically rational to care. It should now seem fairly clear why externalists have typically rejected the internalist's practical rationality claim. Externalists have usually denied that there is some defensible version of practical rationality which implies that all failures of moral motivation are rational failures. Against rationalism externalists have claimed—rightly to my mind—that the morally unmotivated need not suffer from some sort of *formal* inconsistency *a la* Kant.²⁰ Externalists have also noticed that if acting morally is not necessarily in the interest of the agent, then not all failures of moral motivation are failures of instrumental or neo-Humean accounts of practical rationality. These externalists have further claimed—rightly again, I think—that not all failures of moral motivation frustrate the interests of the agent, and hence, do not count as failures of practical rationality in the neo-Humean sense.²¹ If

¹⁷ Cf. David McNaughton, *Moral Vision* (Basil Blackwell, 1988); John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason" *The Monist*, 62, 1979; Jonathan Dancy, *Moral Reasons* (Basil Blackwell, 1993); and W. David Solomon, "Moral Realism and the Amoralist", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, XII, eds. French, Uehling, Wettstein (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

¹⁸ Cf. pp. 68–71 for Smith's claim that amoralists don't really make moral judgments. Why Smith feels compelled to deny that amoralists make moral judgments is puzzling. In chapters 5 & 6 of *The Moral Problem*, Smith develops an account of rationality, which, if correct, would establish that amoralists, akratics, etc., insofar as they fail to be motivated by their moral judgments, are irrational. So, if Smith can establish that amoralists are irrational, why insist that they fail to make moral judgments at all?

¹⁹ Cf. Smith's defense of this reduction in "Objectivity and Moral Realism" in *Reality, Representation and Projection*, eds., J. Haldane and C. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁰ Smith himself attempts to develop a rationalist account which can support the internalist's practical rationality claim. Cf. *The Moral Problem*, chaps. 5 & 6. His account is another attempt to develop an "ideal advisor" theory according to which right actions are those actions which we would desire to do if fully rational (pp. 184–85). For reasons why Smith's account is problematic, cf. James Dreier's review of *The Moral Problem* in *Mind*, vol. 105, no. 148, April, 1996.

²¹ I should qualify this claim by saying that absent something like a theistic metaphysics it is difficult to see how acting morally is necessarily in the interest of the agent. For a defense of the claim that not all failures of moral motivation are failures of practical rationality, cf. Foot, "Morality as a System" and Railton, "Moral Realism". Cf. also Richard Taylor's

A Cause for Concern: Reasons, Causes and Explanations

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externalists are right to claim that neither rationalist nor instrumental accounts of practical rationality can support the internalist's practical rationality claim, a number of conclusions might be drawn. We may simply have to live with the fact that moral failure and rational failure can come apart. I, for one, remain unconvinced that a schism between practical rationality and moral motivation impugns the *importance* of morality or that we ought to think that rational failures are somehow *more* fundamental than moral failures. But perhaps there is a much more modest and sanguine conclusion: internalists and externalists alike should look beyond rationalist and instrumentalist accounts of practical rationality to explore alternative accounts that tightly bind together morality and rationality.²²

This paper argues against causalism about reasons in three stages. First, the paper investigates Professor Davidson's sophisticated version of the claim that we must understand reason-explanations as a kind of causal explanation to highlight the fact that this move does no explanatory work in telling us how we determine for which reasons we act. Second, the paper considers Davidson's true motivation for regarding reasons-explanations as causal which connects with his claim that reasons are causes. He advocates anomalous monism in order to solve the mysterious connection problem. In assessing his proposed solution to this problem, the paper examines his 'extension reply' to the charge that his token identity theory ultimately results in epiphenomenalism. The paper argues that only a reading of this reply makes for a stable anomalous monism but for this reason Davidson's compatibilist metaphysics is unfit for the task of solving the mysterious connection problem. Given that reductive accounts are incompatible with the special features of reasons explanations, the paper concludes that we must reverse the orthodoxy once again and eschew causalism about reasons and reason-explanations. Finally, the paper considers a possible way of recasting our understanding of causation so that the mysterious connection problem disappears.

"During the heyday of neo-Wittgensteinian and Rylean philosophy of mind the era of little red books, it was said that propositional attitude explanations are not causal explanations and that beliefs, intendings, imaginings and the like are not even candidates to be causes.... We have come a long way since then. The work of Davidson, Armstrong, Putnam and Fodor (amongst others) has reversed what was once orthodoxy and it is now widely agreed that propositional attitude attributions describe states and episodes which enter into causal relations"

—Lepore and Loewer, 1989, p. 175

1. Introduction

If propositional attitude psychology must be understood by normative interpretationalist lights then it cannot be reduced or naturalised. Nonetheless, some interpretationalists hope to make peace with naturalism by subscribing to a form of non-reductive physicalism. This is standardly motivated by a

essay, "On the Socratic Dilemma", in *Ethical Theory: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Louis P. Pojman (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1989).

²² My thanks to John Greco, Rich McCombs and Dennis Monokroussos for helpful conversation. Phil Goggans, Daniel Howard-Snyder, Steve Layman and Richard McClelland, together with two anonymous referees, provided beneficial feedback on an earlier draft. A special thanks to Margaret Walker for wise advice.