

Williams on The Amoralist

What is an Amoralist?

An amoralist is someone who makes sincere moral judgements (MJ's) but still denies that *he* has any reason to be moral. He simply doesn't *care* about morality.

Example:

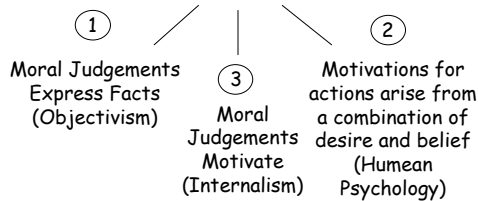
Person 1: "Murder is wrong."

Amoralist: "I accept that, but why should I refrain?"

Person 1: "Because it is wrong"

Amoralist: "So? I still don't see why I should refrain."

Desiderata of a Moral Theory



Note: An acceptance of any two of the above *prima facie* entails the denial of the third

Humean Psychology

Practical Inference:

Desire: I want to get an A in class.

Belief: I can get an A by writing good essays.

Action: I will try to write good essays for this class.

If I am *rational*, then I should draw this inference and I should be *motivated* to act in accordance with its conclusion (i.e., I have a *reason* to act in that way).

Inconsistencies Among Desiderata

- 1 = Objectivism
- 2 = Humean Psychology
- 3 = Internalism

*If (1)&(2), then not (3)

If MJ's are beliefs (i.e. they express facts), then they require a desire in order to motivate action.

*If (2)&(3), then not (1)

If MJ's are desires, then they motivate, but they are not factual.

*If (1)&(3), then not (2)

If Humean Psychology is wrong, then desires are not the only motivating force.

A Moral Theory that Accepts Amoralism as Possible:

1. Accepts Objectivism.
(MJ's are matters of fact.)
2. Accepts Humean Psychology.
(In order to have a reason to be moral, one must have a desire to be moral.)
3. Denies Internalism.
(Therefore, morality alone does not motivate.)

Upshot: If someone lacks the desire to be moral, then he can consistently make sincere MJ's yet fail to have a reason to be moral.

Externalism about MJ's

The Externalist Moralist

1. I believe (i.e., I make the MJ) that murder is wrong.
2. I desire to be moral.
3. Therefore, I have a reason to refrain from acts of murder.

The Amoralist

1. Same as (1) on the left.
- 2'. I do not desire to be moral. (the wide-scope negation of (2)).
- 3'. Therefore, I do not have a reason to refrain from acts of murder.

The amoralist doesn't *happen* to care about morality.

Externalism v. Egoism:

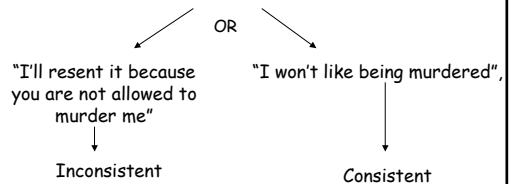
1. A '**peculiar**' moral theory: Everyone should act in the way that I desire.
2. **Egoism (the rejection of morality)**: Everyone should act in the way that promotes his interests.
3. **Externalism about MJ's**: Everyone should be moral if he has a desire to do so.

Are you *Really* an Externalist about MJ's?

1. If it's OK for me to murder because I lack the desire to be moral, then it is OK for someone else to murder because he lacks the desire to be moral. (Entailed by Externalism.)
2. But if that other person murders *me*, it's not OK.

Is (1) Consistent with (2)?

'NOT OK' in (2) can either mean:



Objections to Externalism

1. It resists universalization
2. It may be inconsistent
3. It makes morality a coincidence