האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
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WHY GOOD PEOPLE REEVALUATE UNDERIVED MORAL BELIEFS?

By

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Discussion Paper # 651   November 2013

מרכז לחקר הרציונליות

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RATIONALITY

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ABSTRACT

Are good people motivated to behave in accordance *the moral truth whatever it is*? Michael Smith, who has named this motivation *the de-dicto moral motivation*, famously criticized it. According to Smith, good people are instead motivated directly by more concrete moral concerns, such as "the well-being of their fellows, people getting what they deserve, justice, equality, and the like". Here I argue for the non-Smithian view that good people have (also) a *de-dicto* moral motivation. The argument runs roughly as follows: given that good people tend to behave appropriately, and that in some situations it is appropriate to reevaluate one's underived moral beliefs, good people tend to seriously reevaluate underived moral beliefs sometimes. Theories of motivation have to account for this fact (a point overlooked by Smith and his respondents). What motivates a good person to pay attention to evidence that is contrary to her underived moral beliefs? What does she aim for in reevaluating those beliefs? I argue that the view that good people are motivated to act morally *de-dicto* is in a better position to explain the relevant facts about good people's reevaluation of underived moral beliefs.

Do good people have the goal of behaving in accordance with *the moral truth whatever it is*? Michael Smith famously criticizes the pursuit of this abstract goal. According to Smith, good people are instead motivated directly by more concrete moral concerns, such as "the well-being of their fellows, people getting what they deserve, justice, equality, and the like".[1] Smith terms the motivation to pursue such concrete moral goals (for their intrinsic features, not for the reason that they are morally good) as *motivation to act morally de-re*, contrasting it with the motivation *to act morally de-dicto*.[2] The difference is that only the latter motivation has an intentional object with the abstract property of *moral rightness* (or some abstract property that would be equivalent in this context, such as *being morally valuable*).[3] To illustrate this *de-re/de-dicto* distinction, think of a person who doesn't care about morality as such, but wants to promote equality (say, merely for the sake of equality). As long as morality requires the promotion of equality, it would be true that this person wants to act morally *de-re*. However, it is false that this person wants to behave in accordance with *the moral truth whatever it is*, so (by definition) he doesn't have motivation to act morally *de-dicto*. I shall refer to the latter motivation as "*de-dicto* moral motivation".

What I mainly seek to contribute in this paper is one significant consideration in support of the non-Smithian view that good people have a *de-dicto* moral motivation: I argue (to a first approximation) that this view is in a better position to explain why good

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[1] Smith, Michael. (1994) *The Moral Problem*, Wiley-Blackwell, 75. Smith later notes that he regrets using the term "good people" in *The Moral Problem*, as the type of people to whom he wants his argument (for Judgment Internalism) to apply seem to form a wider group: those that possess the "executive virtue" of "being disposed to conform their motivations to their moral beliefs in a reliable way, at least absent weakness of will and the like" [Smith, Michael. (1996) 'The Argument for Internalism: Reply to Miller', *Analysis* 56, no. 3, 177]. Nevertheless, statements like the one I quoted above from *The Moral Problem* seem to target *good people* in a more substantive sense, as does my article.

[2] It seems that sometimes Smith uses the term *de-re moral motivation* to describe a motivation to φ in cases where the agent believes that φ-ing is good, regardless of whether or not φ-ing is *really* good. [See Lillehammer, Hallvard. (1997) 'Smith on Moral Fetishism', *Analysis* 57, no. 3, 189.] I do not use the term *de-re moral motivation* in this way.

[3] An agent could be motivated *to act morally de-dicto* under a different description. For example, being motivated to do "what I really ought to do" seems close enough.

people reevaluate their moral beliefs.[4] Smith and his respondents seem to have overlooked the need for theories of moral motivation to account for this reevaluation.[5]

Before I proceed to outline my main argument, a few terminological clarifications are in order.

I focus on "good people" in the sense of what a reasonable parent or educator would appeal to when saying, "I am educating the children to be good people", seeing this goal as attainable by many normal children. This sense of *good* people is distinct from *morally perfect* or *infallible*, as it doesn't seem that many (or any) normal children could come to be psychologically constituted in a way which guarantees that they would never act immorally. Rather, the psychological make-up of good people is such that they would at least *tend* to act in a morally appropriate manner under normal situations.

I classify a moral belief as *underived* if the agent does not consider its justification as totally dependent on some other moral principles. If the agent considers the justification of a principle as fundamental (or independent of other moral principles), I call the agent's underived moral belief *fundamental*. (So fundamental moral beliefs are a subset of underived moral beliefs.) These notions of *underived* and *fundamental* moral beliefs are psychologically descriptive (of the agent), and distinct from the epistemological notion of

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[4] To clarify the view for which I argue, it might be helpful to state some possibilities that I don't intend to rule out here. Firstly, I don't rule out the possibility that good people must also have certain *de-re* moral motivations. Secondly (despite some of my formulations), I don't rule out the possibility that the *de-dicto* moral motivation that (some) good people have is actually an unconscious disposition, or motivating belief (if there is such a thing). Thirdly (despite how I defined the *de-dicto* moral motivation above), I don't rule out the possibility the *de-dicto* moral motivation that (some) good people have is actually a second-order desire to (always) be motivated directly by first-order *de-re* moral motivations. [This idea is from: Dreier, James. (2000) 'Dispositions and Fetishes: Externalist Models of Moral Motivation', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61, no. 3.] And lastly, I don't rule out the possibility that (some) good people consider their goal of *acting morally* as merely derivative of another goal. In particular, think of meta-ethical views that see morality as derived from general normativity, or rationality, or (practical) reason. Some good person, having such a view, might consider her goal of acting morally as derived from her goal of making the right choice, in some sense of rightness that is wider than moral rightness.

[5] This is surprising especially in light of the fact that Smith started his discussion of the matter by (rightly) setting the challenge for theories of moral motivation to account for "the striking fact" that the motivation of good people "follows reliably in the wake of a new moral judgement" (Smith 1994, 71). But what motivates good people to form a new moral judgment also has to be accounted for.

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fundamentally justified beliefs. To illustrate, here are examples of the three relevant categories of beliefs: (a) If an agent thinks that only because it would promote happiness in the world we ought to respect human rights, her moral belief in human rights is *derived,* not underived; (b) if an agent intuitively believes that we ought to respect human rights, never giving thought to whether this principle is a derivative of some other normative principle or not, her moral belief in human rights is *underived*; (c) if the agent believes that we ought to respect human rights and considers this principle as fundamentally justified, I classify her belief in this principle as underived and (more particularly) *fundamental*. My main argument focuses on *underived* moral beliefs because the connection between their reevaluation and the *de-dicto* moral motivation is stronger (as we shall see in section III).

Turning now to my main argument, it starts with the normative claim (defended in section II) that under certain conditions, that are not very rare, it would be inappropriate *not* to seriously reevaluate one's moral beliefs, even *underived* and *fundamental* ones. Given that good people (in the relevant sense) tend to behave appropriately, good people tend to seriously reevaluate underived moral beliefs whenever it is appropriate to do so (as is sometimes the case). How should a theory of motivation account for the relevant facts about good people's reevaluation? What do good people aim for in reevaluating underived moral beliefs?

One thing that a good person *could* aim for in such reevaluation, as illustrated in section I, is to figure out the moral truth, in order to act morally *de-dicto*. Moreover, as I argue in section III, the view that good people have a *de-dicto* moral motivation is in a better position to explain why the good person tends to care about the possibility that she is mistaken in any moral belief; why she "stays alert" for evidence of such a mistake (under certain circumstances), and to explain her mental effort in reevaluation of the relevant kind.

Since my main argument takes the form of an inference to the best explanation, objections may fall into two categories: objections that deny the explanandum (that good people tend to reevaluate etc.), which I address in section II, and objections that argue for alternative competing explanations which I address in section III.

Note that I am not discussing, in this paper, Smith's argument against the *de-dicto* moral motivation, which claims that it amounts to moral fetishism, nor Smith's argument for Judgment-Internalism which relies on this claim.[6] Rather, this paper presents an independent positive argument for the view that it is necessary for good people to have a *de-dicto* moral motivation. Such arguments, at least in a sufficiently developed form, are lacking from the literature that responds to Smith's attack on the *de-dicto* moral motivation. Most of the critical responses to Smith's attack on the *de-dicto* moral motivation seem to try to establish merely that in some cases it is forgivable, permissible or sufficiently virtuous to be motivated by the *de-dicto* moral motivation, not ruling out that it would be equally or more virtuous in such cases to be motivated only by *de-re* moral motivations. In contrast, my argument is based on a special type of cases where the concern for morality *de-dicto* is *necessary* for performing the morally appropriate activity. Arnon Keren was the first (as far as I know) to point out the relevance of moral ignorance and uncertainty here:

> Given our undeniable moral ignorance, we clearly ought to desire to know what our moral obligations are. But someone who does not desire to do what is right, whatever it turns out to be, either does not desire to know what his moral obligations are, or desires to know what his moral obligations are, but lacks the desire to act upon this knowledge. Either way, such a person would exhibit a moral failing. [...] beings like us, who must seek moral knowledge, and often act under conditions of moral uncertainty, ought to care about doing the right thing, whatever it may turn out to be.[7]

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[6] For such discussions, see for instance: Lillehammer 1997; Svavarsdóttir, Sigrun. (1999) 'Moral Cognitivism and Motivation', *The Philosophical Review* 108, no. 2; Dreier 2000; Enoch, David. (2011) *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism*, Oxford: Oxford University press, 247-259.
[7] Keren, Arnon. Unpublished manuscript.

Similarly, Vanessa Carbonell claims that *de-dicto* moral motivation is helpful in cases where "we want to do what is right but do not (yet) know exactly what is right, and therefore have no direct *de-re* motivations toward any particular course of action." Carbonell supports this claim with an example featuring a woman who is under moral uncertainty, about whom Carbonell says "it is because she cares about doing the right thing that she will seek out information and deliberate".[8] In this paper I develop the embryonic idea expressed by Keren and Carbonell, defending extensively the view that it is necessary for good people to have a *de-dicto* moral motivation against alternative views.

I. An Illustration

Let me first illustrate how the *de-dicto* moral motivation *may* function in the behavior of good people by discussing a variation on the following example from Michael Smith:

> Suppose I am engaged in an argument with you about […] whether we should vote for the libertarian party at some election as opposed to the social democrats. In order to make matters vivid, we will suppose that I come to the argument already judging that we should vote for the libertarians, and already motivated to do so as well. During the course of the argument, let's suppose you convince me that I am fundamentally wrong. I should vote for the social democrats, and not just because the social democrats will better promote the values I thought would be promoted by the libertarians, but rather because the values I thought should and would be promoted by the libertarians are fundamentally mistaken. You get me to change my most fundamental values.[9]

Let us name the protagonist in this story (whose moral beliefs undergo a deep change) "Sam". Let us stipulate that Sam initially believes that persons have the power to acquire rights over natural resources without anyone's consent, and that Sam initially considers this libertarian principle as fundamental, justified independently of other moral principles and values.[10] Smith depicts the change in Sam's views as related to Sam's engagement in

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[8] Carbonell, Vanessa. (2013) 'De Dicto Desires and Morality as Fetish', *Philosophical Studies* 163, no. 2, 471. Carbonell also adds a separate interesting argument for the importance of the *de-dicto* moral motivation under a ''non-buck-passing'' account of rightness (ibid. 472-477).

[9] Smith 1994, 71.

[10] See: Vallentyne, Peter. (2012) 'Libertarianism', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

an argument.[11] We can ask, what motivates Sam to engage in the argument? Of course, various motivations can be active, such as a motivation to convince his interlocutor. However, it is possible to depict Sam, being a good person, as entering the argument with an openness toward changing his beliefs, even the most fundamental ones, and a willingness to do so if it would turn out that his beliefs are not true. And this depiction assumes that Sam is motivated to engage in the argument (partly) by a concern for the *de-dicto* moral truth.

But more important than what motivates Sam to engage in the argument is how the change in his views comes about. Smith says that Sam becomes convinced that his old view is false. We can imagine that this follows some serious reevaluation, which is called for. And this brings us to our central issue. What makes Sam reevaluate? What does Sam aim for in his reevaluation?

It is possible to fill in the details in the following way: Sam realizes that reevaluation is needed because his interlocutor gives him reason to doubt his previous moral belief. It is important for Sam to get it right partly in order to make the right choice (*de-dicto*) in the upcoming elections. Moreover: Sam finds the occasion right for such reevaluation, in light of the fact that he hasn't reconsidered the relevant moral issue in a long time, and the fact that there is nothing more urgent that he has to do. Sam's reevaluation consists in a serious deliberative effort to figure out the moral truth as to whether persons have the power to appropriate natural resources without consent. Sam's conclusion is that they don't, thereby abandoning his old view.

According to this natural way of thinking about Sam's case, the *de-dicto* moral motivation clearly plays a dominant role in Sam's reevaluation of his underived moral belief.

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[11] Interestingly, the change came via a process of argument also in the only other belief-change example that Smith brings in his writings on the subject: Smith 1966, 180. There, too, the protagonist changes an underived moral belief.

II. Why Fallible Beings Should Reevaluate Moral Beliefs

Some may think that the tendency to reevaluate moral beliefs is at most a virtue for intermediate stages of becoming a good person, a Wittgensteinian ladder.[12] This way of denying the explanandum in my argument could be based on the view that people who are *really* good already know all they have to know about moral matters, so for them reevaluation would just be a waste of time. From this perspective, reevaluation of moral beliefs could be seen as a sign of moral uncertainty, which indicates that the agent is *not* a good person. To take Sam's case, had he been a good person (under this view) he would have already known, before engaging in the argument, whether persons have the power to appropriate natural resources without consent (or at least he would have already known all the fundamental moral principles that are relevant to this issue).

But remember, firstly, that the relevant sense of good people is distinct from the sense of *morally perfect* or *morally infallible*.[13] One could have the character traits and the psychological constitution that make a *good person* in the relevant sense before (or *without*) coming to know all one has to know about morality. In my view, good people can have false moral beliefs, and even false underived moral beliefs. However, secondly, even if some good people happen to know all they have to know about morality, I cannot see how they could ever be *justifiably certain* that that they will never need the so called "Wittgensteinian ladder" of reevaluation. Fallible beings like us cannot (always) be justifiably certain that they know all they have to know about moral matters, even if they actually do. Even theoreticians who insist that there is only one fundamental moral principle that exhausts all of morality (such as some advocates of Utilitarianism or of

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[12] *//Removed for blind review.*
[13] I doubt that we have reliable intuitions about the psychological structure of people who are infallible in their fundamental (or other) moral judgments. I don't know anyone that meets such a high standard. I think it is more fruitful to discuss the motivation of good people who are fallible in any kind of moral judgment (and that such a discussion holds important implications for the field of education).

Kant's categorical imperative), and hold that all good people know this fundamental moral principle, should acknowledge that under some possible circumstances (that are not very rare), there may be good reasons to seriously reevaluate the belief in this fundamental principle.

In particular, think of circumstances where an agent, who holds a true moral belief, obtains new information that (misleadingly) suggests that she is wrong. This information might consist of counter-arguments, facts that elicit counter-intuitions to the relevant belief, unexpected implications of the relevant belief, opinions of others whom the agent has good reason to respect, signs that there is something wrong with the agent's own memory or deliberative abilities, signs that the causal process that has led the agent to the relevant belief is epistemologically unreliable, signs that there is something wrong with the experts or the tradition upon which the agent relied in forming her view, or the simple fact that a very long time has passed since the agent has last reflected on the matter, etc.; or some combination of such pieces of information. Under some such circumstances, full confidence in the relevant belief wouldn't be justified, and furthermore (given that something important is at stake, there is no time-pressure or similar considerations), it would be morally irresponsible *not* to reevaluate the relevant moral matter.[14]

It may be objected that in cases like the above, where a person happens to have the right moral view but cannot justifiably be certain in regard to it (or – some may claim - even in

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[14] To state it more strongly, under some such circumstances the agent *ought* to reevaluate the relevant fundamental moral belief. I am appealing here to the type of *ought* that is relativized to the person's accessible evidence. It is this type of *ought* that is relevant for the purpose of evaluating a person's psychological constitution, not what ought to be done from the perspective of an all-knower. [For an attempt to define the type of *ought* to which I am appealing and defend its relevancy against more objective senses of *ought* see: Zimmerman, Michael J. (2008) *Living with Uncertainty: The Moral Significance of Ignorance*, Cambridge Studies in Philosophy, Cambridge University Press; Lord, Errol. 'Acting for the Right Reasons, Abilities, and Obligation', forthcoming in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol. 10, Oxford University Press.]

some cases where the person doesn't even have the right moral view), reevaluation would be epistemically or deliberatively virtuous, but not *morally* virtuous.

When we evaluate people's character, or educate, I strongly doubt that it would be reasonable to adopt such a narrow perspective that ignores epistemic and deliberative virtues of this kind. However, for my present purposes, it suffices to say that it is reasonable and legitimate, in education and in evaluation of character, *not* to adopt such a narrow perspective. There is a certain (interesting) "reflective" type of good people who *do* tend to reconsider their fundamental moral beliefs when the circumstances call for it. Perhaps such people are both morally and epistemically virtuous. The existence of this type of good people is enough to call for an explanation as to their motivation.

Another objection, or an independent explanandum-denying view, could be based on the claim that reflective reevaluation is ineffective in bringing one's (fundamental) moral views closer to the truth. What comes to mind here are cases where automatic "System 1" processes (such as emotional mechanisms or intuitions) lead to better judgments than reflective "System 2" processes (reasoning).[15]

No doubt, such cases exist, perhaps even regarding moral judgments. But reflective reevaluation of underived moral beliefs is at least appropriate in the type of cases where the reevaluation *is* expected to help form better judgments. As long as *this* type of cases exists, the explanandum survives (as good people tend to reevaluate in this type of cases).[16]

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[15] These notions of "System 1" and "System 2" are taken from: Kahneman, Daniel. (2011) *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Farrar Straus & Giroux.

[16] The role of critical thinking in the formation of fundamental moral judgments has been emphasized not only by rationalist moral philosophers but also by leading psychologists (like L. Kohlberg). Indeed, recent experimental research (for instance by J. D. Greene or J. Haidt) has emphasized the role of automatic processes and emotional mechanisms in people's actual moral judgments. But the experimental data does not rule out the possibility that critical thinking can influence one's automatic processes, fine-tuning moral intuitions [as argued in: Sauer, Hanno. (2012) 'Educated Intuitions. Automaticity and Rationality in Moral Judgement', *Philosophical Explorations* 15, no. 3. See also:

I think enough has been said to render it very plausible that (at least a certain kind of) good people tend to reevaluate underived (and even fundamental) moral beliefs whenever it is appropriate to do so, as is sometimes the case in real life. With this I close my brief discussion of attempts to deny this fact, which calls for an explanation in terms of motivation.

III. Competing Explanations

Let us now examine competing explanations of good people's reevaluation; explanations that do not rely on the *de-dicto* moral motivation, but only on *de-re* moral motivations.

Notice that none of the goals that Smith lists in The Moral Problem (p. 75) seem to provide a motive for a reevaluation of "itself", that is, for trying to figure out whether this goal should be pursued. Wanting to promote equality, for instance, doesn't provide any motive to critically reevaluate equality. And it seems that a good person might (realistically) face a situation in which it is appropriate to reevaluate the promotion of equality. The same holds for the rest of those goals. I address particular epistemic goals that *could* provide a motive to reevaluate their own value below. However, let us first consider a type of competing explanation that does not rely on such epistemic goals.

It may seem that, in situations where φ-ing conflicts with ψ-ing, a motivation to φ could provide a motive to reevaluate ψ-ing. For example: Isabel wants to minimize suffering in the world, and also to keep promises, and considers each of these goals as an independent moral value (which makes her belief in these values not only underived but also fundamental, according to my terminology). Now Isabel faces a dilemma where she can prevent much suffering by breaking a promise. In this situation, Isabel's *de-re* desire

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Bortolotti, Lisa. (2011) 'Does Reflection Lead to Wise Choices?', *Philosophical Explorations* 14, no. 3.]

to minimize suffering might motivate her to rethink the value of keeping promises. Could perhaps some competing explanation for why good people reevaluate be constructed along these lines?

Notice, though, firstly, that such explanations seem to be relevant only to a very limited set of cases. If there are situations where Isabel's goal of keeping promises doesn't stand in tension with minimizing suffering, and yet she should reevaluate keeping promises, then her motivation to minimize suffering wouldn't normally lead her to do so. Moreover, if Isabel has other moral beliefs that ought to be reevaluated under some circumstances, the explanatory challenge becomes greater. The suggested type of competing explanations suffices only if it is appropriate to reevaluate certain beliefs whenever they are all (at least usually) in tension with minimizing suffering, or with other goals that have to be presupposed (making this explanation less unified and arguably less parsimonious). It seems that the existence of evidence (or epistemic states) that call for reevaluation of underived moral beliefs doesn't always depend on having the type of motivational conflicts as in Isabel's case. If so, it is very doubtful that all cases in which reevaluation is called for are suitable for the discussed type of competing explanations, which is based on such motivational conflicts.

Secondly, there is a stronger consideration against this type of competing explanations. Regardless of what triggers reevaluation of an underived moral belief, I want to argue that such reevaluation cannot be (seriously) performed without having some concern for the true answer regarding the relevant moral question. A reexamination of Isabel's case will help to show that serious reevaluation of an underived moral belief must partly *consist* in an effort to figure out the moral truth *de-dicto*. In the situation where Isabel can prevent much suffering by breaking a promise, what could be the role of her motivation to prevent suffering in her deliberative efforts to figure out whether keeping promises is of moral value? Isabel's motivation to prevent suffering may lead her to think, "oh no,

keeping that promise would lead to so much suffering, I must break it." But there is no reevaluation here. Suppose we add to her thoughts, "but breaking a promise is bad, at least as I used to think. Well, I am free to change my mind. From now on I shall hold that breaking a promise is the right thing to do when it minimizes suffering. This way I can allow myself to break the promise now, and prevent much suffering." Still, no serious reevaluation. With such thoughts it doesn't seem that Isabel sincerely changes her mind about the moral value of keeping promises.[17] And if she does sincerely change her mind only by way of such thoughts, then she seems guilty of wishful thinking, for she believes something only because it allows her to fulfill her desire to minimize suffering. What's missing is some concern for the true moral value of keeping promises ("…But is it really OK to break a promise in order to prevent much suffering?"). The *de-dicto* moral concern is inherent to the mental effort of sincerely trying to figure out the fundamentals of morality by properly processing the relevant evidence.[18]

Perhaps such a concern can be *triggered* by the aforementioned thoughts, as it could also by watching a movie or many other experiences. Possibly, *de-dicto* moral motivation may be triggered by another motivation, including *de-re* moral motivation.[19] But if Isabel's *only* concern in rethinking her belief in keeping promises is to minimize suffering, so that she doesn't make any effort to estimate the real moral value of keeping promises, it doesn't seem that such rethinking could constitute moral reevaluation of keeping promises in the manner in which good people tend to reevaluate.

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[17] Compare: "oh no, keeping that promise requires me to get up from bed so early in the morning. I must break it. But breaking a promise is bad, at least as I used to think. Well I am free to change my mind. From now on I shall hold that breaking a promise is the right thing to do if the promise requires you to get up early in the morning. This way I can allow myself to break the promise now, and stay in bed."

[18] I am using an example of a reevaluation of a *fundamental* moral belief, in order to avoid the following special case: think of an agent that believes with certainty that the set "S" is the set of all the true fundamental moral principles, and that S doesn't include P. If this agent deliberates about whether some moral principle "P" (not included in S) is derived from S, this deliberation could constitute a restricted type of (re)evaluation of P. This type of (re)evaluation could be performed without a *de-dicto* moral concern, because a direct concern for S could suffice.

[19] *//Removed for blind review.*

Another possible type of competing explanation could be based on an assumption that good people are motivated to pursue an epistemic goal that requires reevaluation of moral beliefs (whenever appropriate). For example, the epistemic goal *to know the moral truth* usually requires such reevaluation when one's evidence suggests that one's beliefs may be mistaken.[20]

However, it doesn't seem that the epistemic goals that come to mind here would suffice to explain another fact about the tendency of good people to reevaluate: This tendency is sensitive to some *practical* appropriateness-conditions for reevaluating. Good people tend to be selective in devoting time and energy to moral (re)evaluation, partly in light of the practical implications of each issue to their own future conduct, and the urgency of these implications. To illustrate these practical aspects, it is often more appropriate to reevaluate views on a moral issue that has implications for what the agent ought to do in the near future than to reevaluate views about more distant moral matters (think of something like "can states have property rights on the moon?"). Now think of Sam's case. If what motivates Sam to reevaluate is just a desire to know the moral truth, why should he prefer to reevaluate his belief in libertarian values *before* the upcoming elections rather than after them? Yet, it would seem morally irresponsible if before the elections, Sam spends days reflecting about a moral principle that is irrelevant for the elections (such as whether states can have property rights on the moon), while neglecting to reevaluate a belief that has implications for the question *whom to vote for*, after obtaining information (from his interlocutor) that puts this belief into doubt. Motivation to merely know the moral truth doesn't discriminate between these two epistemic activities. Any motivation to achieve goals that are purely epistemic and disregards such practical

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[20] Part of the attractiveness of such epistemic goals, in our context, is that they could provide a motive to reconsider their own value.

appropriateness-conditions for reevaluating wouldn't suffice for explaining a tendency that is sensitive to these conditions. And yet such a tendency can be explained by assuming that the concern that good people have for the moral truth isn't merely theoretical, but conducted with an aim to *behave* accordingly.

How about accounting for the explanandum directly with the assumption that good people have a motivation to seriously reevaluate their moral beliefs whenever it is the most appropriate thing to do? I cannot deny that this suggested motivation could account for the explanandum, provided that 'appropriate' here is interpreted in the right way, which is subject to practical conditions, as discussed in the previous paragraph. But it seems strange to have this suggested motivation without having the *de-dicto* moral motivation. Why take into account practical considerations in deciding to reevaluate, if you don't reevaluate (at least partly) *in order* to behave accordingly? Try to imagine Sam going through the trouble of reevaluating his belief in the libertarian principle, deciding to do so partly *because* this issue is an important consideration for voting for the best candidate in the upcoming elections, but *without caring about actually voting* for the best candidate.

IV. Conclusion

Good people (of a certain kind) tend to seriously reevaluate their underived moral beliefs when the circumstances call for it, as is indeed sometimes the case. Their reevaluation partly consists in a mental effort to assess the moral truth *de-dicto*. The view that good people have the *de-dicto* moral motivation seems to be in a good position to explain the relevant facts about their tendency to reevaluate, as well as to explain the mental effort in their reevaluation of underived moral beliefs. Competing explanations, which do not rely on the view that good people have the *de-dicto* moral motivation, seem inferior if not

inadequate (at least the ones I could think of).[21] In the last analysis, this consideration

strongly supports the view that good people have a *de-dicto* moral motivation.

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[21] Though the value of an explanation partly depends on the value of the general theory of motivation of which it is part, and obviously, such theories face challenges that lie outside the scope of this paper.