

Coexistence of Internalism and Externalism

Kiichi TACHIBANA

1.

It is taken for granted that there are some conflicts between externalists and internalists. Indeed both parties ceaselessly attack each other and defend themselves. Against this opinion, Agassi, in his paper, 'Externalism'¹, raises the question whether there are any conflicts between internalism and externalism. His answer to this question is naturally negative and I am of the same opinion. But his writing is slightly ambiguous and hard to understand. In this short paper, I will try to make it clear that there is no conflict between internalists and externalists, but a positively peaceful coexistence.

2.

In the beginning, Agassi makes fun of the historians who ignore internal factors of science---he calls them 'pure externalists'---as 'the shelter of ignorance.'² Such historians fortunately can write some history of science without understanding any content of science. As usual his criticism is quite sharp, probably because he is a Jew; generally a Jew's mind is full of critical spirit. (This explanation, you know, has nothing to do with the question whether Agassi's criticism is sharp or not. As you will see later, the externalists who regard the science as one of ideologies cannot deny that there is some true content or false content in science.) The internalists, of course, ignore such purely external historians. For pure externalists do not raise any problems to the internalists. So there cannot be any conflicts between them.

3.

So far so good. However, in this world there exist *impure externalists*³ who do not ignore the internal factors. How do not they ignore the internal factors? What do they say about the internal factors without ignoring them? I am neither an internalist nor an externalist because of my ignorance both of the content of science and the social factors of science. I just want to know what sort of relation exists between the externalists and the internalists. My position is like an outsider who observes the conflicts between the Jews and the Arabs.

Either peaceful coexistence; cooperation, competition or conflicts; mutual denial, the offence-defence relation?

¹ Agassi, J., 1978, *Externalism*, *Manuscripto*, Vol.2, No.1.

² *Ibid.*, p.68.

³ Impure externalists are those who intend to explain the internal part of science from some external factors, or try to abolish the demarcation between the internal and the external of science.

4.

Whereas there is an indifferent coexistence between pure externalists and internalists, it seems to most people that there cannot be coexistence but conflict between impure externalists and internalists. Though Agassi suggests the competing relation 'each to get more attention, public support, etc.'⁴ I do not think their relation is a competition in the usual sense. For in order to compete, a common aim is required, but the common aim which Agassi mentions may be only a secondary one. For example, a sprinter and a scientist might have a common aim to wish to be famous. However, for a sprinter the primary aim is to run, for example, one hundred meters as fast as possible, on the other hand, for a scientist the aim is to search for the truth.

Agassi's suggestion of the existence of competition between internalists and externalists⁵ is not persuasive, and he does not show the possibility of cooperation.

5.

We have to turn to Agassi's opinion about the question of the existence of conflicts between externalists and internalists. Agassi seems to be far from agreeing about the existence of conflicts between them. However, the readers of Agassi's paper might suspect that Agassi avoids the very point of conflicts in spite of his perceiving it. For the one paragraph which appears to deal with the issue of conflict is vague and confusing. Agassi writes as follows:

I have thus far presented classical inductivism, with its view of science as the autonomous search for truth, as internalist par excellence, and classical Marxism, or a variant of it, with its view of science as a part of the social process (class-struggle) as the opposite, the denial that internalism can be kept pure. This picture is false and needs correction. Indeed I wish to declare that as far as the disagreement could be put as plainly as there was hardly any interest in the debate, that interest flared up because matters did get out of hand --- and in quite a fascinating manner, may I add.⁶

I know that classical inductivism is false and needs correction. But does Agassi consider that the view of science as the search for truth is false and needs correction? Though his description is ambiguous and it is difficult to tell which part he thinks needs correction, I guess that Agassi agrees with the view of science as the search for truth. For he writes, 'In science the goal is truth,

⁴ Agassi[1978], p.68.

⁵ In the following by 'externalism' I mean 'impure externalism'.

⁶ Agassi[1978], p.74.

the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.'⁷ Then does he think that classical Marxists' view of science as a part of the social process (class-struggle) needs correction? There is no answer.

In the next paragraph, Agassi asks the following question whether this move [that is, when an internalist applying his theory encounters difficulties, he introduces external factors to overcome them] is quite kosher. This problem-setting is no longer a judge's one. In the rest of his paper, he seems try to defend the internalist way as being kosher. He has already been the defender of internalism, tacitly acknowledging the existence of the conflicts between internalism and externalism.

A judge has to ascertain a point at issue from a relatively neutral standpoint. In one case two opponents might misunderstand each other. In another case there might be some apparent errors on one side or on both sides. In the above cases the problem can be settled by removing the misunderstanding or the errors. Or in fact there might be a genuine clash, due to insufficient evidence to settle the matter one way or the others, accordingly it might be impossible to settle the problem at present or even in the future.

In which case is the alleged clash between the internalists and the externalists?

6.

The point of issue between the externalists and the internalists seems to be in the externalists' negation of inner logic of judging the truth or falsity of scientific knowledge. According to the externalists, any knowledge is existentially conditioned (Seinsverbundenheit des Wissens). However, the extent of the existentially conditioned ranges from the mild claim that pedigree of knowledge has no necessary relation to its validity, which is naturally compatible with internalism, to the extremely radical claim that knowledge is merely outcome of various social causes, for example, the reflection of class interests.

In his classic book, *Social Theory and Social Structure*,⁸ R. Merton analyzes the above relation closely, i.e., the relation between knowledge and existential basis held by Marx, Engels, Manheim, Durkheim, Scheler, Sorokin.⁹ As an analysis of the externalist view mentioned above, his analysis is, in my opinion, so clear and exact that it will be worthwhile to review here.

Merton classifies Manheim's view about the validity of knowledge under three major heads; Dynamic Criteria of Validity, Structural Warranties of Validity and Relationalism. Concerning Dynamic

⁷ Ibid., p.73.

⁸ Merton R., 1968, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Enlarged Edition, The Free Press, New York.

⁹ In this paper I take up only Marx, Engels, and Manheim. For the others do not insist the radical claim that there is a causal relation between the infrastructure and the superstructure.

Criteria of Validity, Merton says that as Shelting has shown, this view is untenable.¹⁰ Manheim, however, tries to save this view by positing 'class position' of the 'socially unattached intellectuals,' though he perceives the difficulty of it. But as you know, this idea too, is untenable.¹¹ In fact, Manheim moderates this view considerably and holds the view of Relationalism. This view 'may be readily assimilated to those by Rickert and Max Weber,'¹² According to this view, 'the validity of propositions is no longer ascertained through wissenssoziologische analysis but through direct investigation of the object.'¹³

On Marx and Engels, Merton says, 'Marxist analyses are apt to have an excessive degree of "flexibility", about to the point where any development can be explained away as a temporary aberration or deviation ... where the concept of "accident" provides a ready means of saving the theory from facts which seem to challenge its validity...[A] decisive question must be raised in order to determine whether we have a genuine theory: how can the theory be invalidated? In any given historical situation, which data will contradict and invalidate the theory? Unless this can be answered directly, unless the theory involves statements which can be contradicted by definite types of evidence, it remains merely a pseudo-theory which will be compatible with any array of data.'¹⁴

Merton suggests Marxist theory is but a pseudo-theory. Here too, the kosher problem--- as Agassi calls it¹⁵ --- occurs. The problem is whether the Marxists' method of defending infrastructural explanation of knowledge by using auxiliary theory is kosher or not. Accordingly both parties have to insist that our own theory is kosher and genuine but your theory is not kosher, therefore, it is mistaken or pseudo. This problem is quite interesting and very relevant to our problem. In this paper, however, I will only touch upon this problem later, for at present this problem is beyond my ability.

Here I accept provisionally Merton's view of Marxist theory that it is non-kosher.¹⁶ Thus, according to Merton, where Marxists state ambiguously, although their position seems to be the extremely radical one, their theory cannot be scientific and is untenable. On the other hand, as far as they state clearly and specifically, their

¹⁰ Merton[1968], pp.557-8.

¹¹ Cf. Popper, K.R., 1945, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Vol.2, Chap.23, pp.212-23.

¹² Merton[1968], p.559.

¹³ Ibid., p.559.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.533.

¹⁵ Agassi[1978], p.74.

¹⁶ I do not necessarily regard the internalist way as kosher. See page 7.

position is the mild one. In short, the externalists' explanation of the scientific knowledge by only external factors is mistaken, therefore, their attempt fails and internalism stands.

If the internalists are mistaken in anything, it is that they misunderstood the externalists' view and over-reacted, that is, attacked them.¹⁷ As a result, all the more the internalists gave the world the impression that their bias was revealed and shown to be false by the externalists. For the internalists, the best course of action was to ignore the externalists.¹⁸

The division of labour is supposed to have come existence in this way. The internalists (philosophers of science or methodologists) concern themselves with the internal logic of science and the externalists (sociologists or historians) concern themselves with the external aspect of science. Moreover, the externalists are subordinate to the internalists. For externalists cannot begin their work until they are handed over the irrational residue of science by the internalists. As far as the internalists' explanation is successful, i.e., scientific activities are rational in the light of the internalists' criterion of rationality, there is no work for the externalists. The work which is given to the externalists is to explain causally the errors or irrationality which scientists happen to do. Such an internalist approach becomes a fashion. And the externalists voluntarily or resignedly limit the domain of their investigation. However, such an unbalanced coexistence will not continue for long.

7.

Recently some sociologists opposed to such an internalist approach again attempted to explain the very content and nature of scientific knowledge from external factors. For instance, in his book, *Knowledge and Social Imagery*, D.Bloor criticizes that the hitherto sociology of knowledge is not the sociology of knowledge in general but 'the sociology of error'¹⁹, and proposes the stronger programme in the sociology of knowledge which seems to be incompatible with Lakatosian internalist approach.²⁰ This programme consists of four tenets which are causality, impartiality, symmetry, and reflexivity.²¹ In short, the aim of the sociology of knowledge is to explain all belief or knowledge, whether it is true or false, by

¹⁷ For example. Popper, K.R., *Normal Science and its Danger*, and Lakatos, I., *Falsificationism and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes, Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, 1970, ed. by Lakatos, I. & Musgrave, A., Cambridge University Press, London.

¹⁸ I do not express my value judgment in this sentence.

¹⁹ Bloor, D., 1976, *Knowledge and Social Imagery*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, p.8, 11, 13, 20.

²⁰ Ibid., p.8.

²¹ Ibid., pp.4-5.

the same types of cause. Besides, its patterns of explanation have to be applicable to sociology itself. This attempt is to explain causally the very content of science which is accepted to be true and rational, and accordingly excludes any sociological explanation. It seems to challenge the very autonomy of science which aims at the truth. Bloor applies his programme to mathematics and logic which is the last fortress of rationality and objectivity and to explain them by the social factors.

I do not know the reason but the internalists who defend the rationality or objectivity of science are extremely afraid of the sociological analysis. In order to find the cause of their fear, I will look back to the origin of the sociology of knowledge.

8.

According to Merton, within the same society, when distrust or conflict between groups occurs because of the difference in the values, attitudes and modes of thought, one no longer inquires into the content of beliefs and assertions to determine whether they are valid or not in the light of the relevant evidence, but 'introduces an entirely new question: how does it happen that these view are maintained? Thought becomes functionalized; it is interpreted in terms of its psychological or economic or social or racial sources and functions.'²² This questioning is the beginning of the sociological approach to knowledge. And there is the common factor in these analyses, that is, 'discounting the *face value* of statements, beliefs and idea-systems,'²³

The beginning of the externalist approach was in the attempt to show that the opinion of the opposite is one-sided or limited and only the reflection of a certain group's interest by disclosing his class status, accordingly, *alludes* the falsity of his opinion. From a simple logical fact, however, it is impossible to prove the falsity of one's opinion through the external, sociological analysis. For if the existential determination implies falsity, the view that all knowledge is existentially determined, is itself existentially determined, therefore it cannot claim itself to be true. It was a natural consequence that most sociologists confined their investigation to the sociological analysis of the error which scientists made, in order to avoid the self-contradiction.

But if truth does not exist, it is possible to show that you are existentially determined and I as well am existentially determined, therefore, in the case of the conflict between you and me, as a solution only the struggle remains. Though this is a self-destructive way, it might be useful to show that the rationality and objectivity are but illusions. Some sociologists who intend to class-struggle will adopt such a step. Those who are agitated by this latter type of sociologists and as a result, refuse to accept any arguments and appeal to violence are genuine enemies of the

²² Merton[1968], p.511.

²³ Ibid., p.512. *Italics* are in the original.

rationalists. Though the sociologists who try to criticize the rationality or objectivity of science by means of the rational argument are themselves rationalists, they are indirectly the enemies of the rationalists. Against those who appeal to violence, it is permitted for rationalists to use force, so it seems that there is no problem. But what happens if the public or mass distrusts rationalism and appeals to violence? It will be a disaster. The ideal of the rational unity of mankind will be destroyed.

When Agassi wrote the following sentence, 'perhaps they [the internalists and externalists] are merely trying each to get more attention, public support, etc.,'²⁴ he might have expected this disastrous situation. In such a situation, it is vitally important to get more public support. At this point, the kosher problem becomes more important. What I can say on this problem is that both internalists and externalists theories are both defective and needs corrections.²⁵ Accordingly, this case falls under the group which cannot be settled in the light of the available evidence. As an outsider I hope both will elaborate their own theories.

9.

Let us now return to Bloor. Bloor who is opposed to both the sociologists who are content with the sociology of errors and the internalists who refuse the sociological analysis of the inner logic of science, and who wishes to analyze the content of the knowledge, throws away the original tenet of the sociology of knowledge, that is, 'the idea that the existential determination implies falsity,' He says, 'Whether a belief is to be judged true or false has nothing to do with whether it has a cause.'²⁶

This is a striking statement. For an internalist, the externalist who does not insist or allude the falsity of the existentially determined is like a tamed wild beast. Or rather, it can be said that at last sociology becomes the genuine science getting rid of the state like third-rate newspaper which exclusively takes up the disclosure of a scandal or a gossip. Owing to Bloor, it is possible to analyze the same object in two ways, that is, the analysis of the causality and the analysis of validity. The externalists undertake the former and the internalists undertake the latter. What a peaceful coexistence!

(たちばな・きいち 秋田大学教育学部助教授)

²⁴ Agassi[1978], p.72.

²⁵ The existence of kosher problem itself shows that their theories are defective.

²⁶ Bloor[1976], p.14. He writes, 'The *premise*, that causation implies error,--- have been exposed and *rejected*.' (*Italics* are mine.)