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Can Expressivists Tell the Difference Between Beauty and Moral Goodness?*

One important but infrequently discussed difficulty with expressivism is the attitude type individuation problem.¹ Expressivist theories purport to provide a unified account of normative states. Judgments of moral goodness, beauty, humor, prudence, and the like, are all explicated in the same way: as expressions of attitudes, what Allan Gibbard calls “states of norm-acceptance”. However, expressivism also needs to explain the difference between these different sorts of attitude. It is possible to judge that a thing is both aesthetically good and morally bad. While the realist can explain the difference by suggesting that each judgment makes reference to a different property (or set of properties), the expressivist cannot. She must show that *what is expressed* by the speaker is different in each case. This has proven to be difficult to do.

What is generally thought to be the most promising route to a solution, linking individual emotions with specific attitude types (*viz.*, guilt and impartial anger with the moral attitude), has come under attack on a number of fronts. An alternative approach is to differentiate between different types of normative attitudes according to their inferential roles. This paper defends this latter approach, while considering some difficulties and objections. The success of the approach depends on identifying distinct inferential types in a non-circular way. One distinction in particular is explored here in some detail: the distinction between *recalcitrant* and *compliant* attitudes.

1. The problem, and the emotion-type solution

The problem is summarized nicely by Justin D’Arms and Daniel Jacobson: “... as ‘good’, ‘right’, ‘beautiful’, et. al. are not synonyms, expressivism must distinguish between the different

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varieties of evaluative sentiment. The expressivist needs both to identify a family of mental states expressed in value judgment and to single out those family members implicated in specifically moral evaluation."² While D'Arms and Jacobson focus on the problem of characterizing *moral* attitudes, the same problem exists for every type of normative attitude. Expressivists need a way of telling which evaluative attitudes are prudential, which are aesthetic, and so on.

The problem has not received a great deal of attention. Historically, philosophers simply ignored the differences between moral and other normative attitudes, or claimed that the latter can be easily explained using the former as a model.³ Simon Blackburn, one of the leading contemporary expressivists, does not dismiss the problem entirely, but seems to be unconcerned about it. He claims that:

... I do not think it is profitable to seek a strict definition of 'the' moral attitude here ... We find things important in different ways, and different reactions, emotionally and practically, may equally qualify themselves as expressions of our ethics ... But this difficulty of definition arises not because the subject is mysterious, or especially 'sui generis', or resistant to understanding in any of the terms that enable us to understand the rest of our emotional and motivational natures. It arises because of the polymorphous nature of our emotional and motivational natures themselves.⁴

Blackburn is certainly right that there are some cases where the line between moral and non-moral attitudes blurs. However, as Alexander Miller has noted, there is a great difference between providing a strict definition of the moral attitude in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions that will clearly mark off *all* moral attitudes from aesthetic ones, and giving an informal, even loose account of why it is that moral and non-moral attitudes so often *seem* very

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different to us – even pulling us in different directions.⁵ We can agree with Blackburn that moral and aesthetic attitudes, for example, sometimes “interpenetrate” while still wanting some account of why, in the majority of cases, they seem different.

A familiar approach, which builds on Allan Gibbard’s theory of moral judgment, does seem to promise an answer to this problem. Gibbard distinguishes between the most generic normative endorsement (that something is rational or makes sense) and the more specific *moral* endorsement by tying the latter to a specific emotion: guilt (and impartial anger). Gibbard writes:

... [W]hat a person does is *morally wrong* if and only if it is rational for him to feel guilty for doing it, and for others to resent him.⁶ (emphasis in original)

Analogously, an expressivist might say that when we hold that something is beautiful, we judge it rational to have another emotion (wonder?) when contemplating it, and perhaps the expressivist could continue to individuate attitude types by pairing them with particular emotions.⁷ This approach, however, faces some challenges, illustrated by some of the objections that have been raised against Gibbard’s attempt to tie moral attitudes to guilt. Justin D’Arms and Daniel Jacobson have argued in a series of articles that the account cannot both (1) give a non-circular definition of guilt – that is, a definition that does not invoke the notion of a moral attitude, and (2) disallow cases where one judges that it is right to do something, but it is rational to feel guilty about doing it.⁸ They contend that it is possible for one to judge that is appropriate to feel guilty for *non-moral* reasons. The second objection comes from Shaun Nichols, who has argued that since children make judgments about moral wrongness long before they acquire the concept of guilt, the judgment of moral wrongness cannot be analyzed as a judgment about the appropriateness of guilt.⁹ The third difficulty is suggested by Simon Blackburn, who argues that neither guilt nor shame are necessary for moral judgment.¹⁰

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Blackburn argues that one might argue, on moral grounds, against guilt as a moral emotion.

Neither guilt nor shame (nor, by implication, any other emotion) can be used to mark off moral from non-moral attitudes because one can always judge, *on moral grounds*, that guilt and shame should play no part in morality.

It is possible that all of these objections can be answered successfully. But the objections are serious enough to consider whether another strategy might be more fruitful. Is there a way for the expressivist to distinguish at least roughly between different types of evaluative attitudes, without identifying each type of attitude with a particular emotion? The strategy outlined here suggests that the answer is a provisional “yes.” Focusing on the differences between moral and aesthetic attitudes, it is argued that our ordinary distinction between the two types can be understood in terms of their inferential roles in our mental economy.¹¹

2. Another expressivist strategy: different inferential types

The key innovation of recent expressivist work by Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard over earlier expressivist theories is the development of a logic for attitudes: a system that allows syntactically complex attitudinal states to interact with one another inferentially.¹² The motivation behind these logics is to respond to the “Frege-Geach” objection to expressivism.¹³ While the success of these expressivist logics in responding to these objections is a matter of debate, it is agreed that any expressivist theory, if it is to be successful, will need to provide a logic of attitudes adequate to the task.

A logic of attitudes, among other things, tells us what we can properly infer from a set of attitudes that we have adopted. In some cases, the attitudes we hold imply that we should take up other attitudes that we might not already hold. The original Frege-Geach example is such a case. From an attitude of moral disapproval towards lying, plus an attitude of moral disapproval towards conjoining moral disapproval towards lying with an absence of moral

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disapproval towards getting one's little brother to lie, we can infer a moral disapproval towards getting one's brother to lie.

According to traditional expressivist accounts, all attitudes – moral, aesthetic, prudential, or otherwise -- have the same inferential properties. For example, aesthetic and moral attitudes have the same logical form and the same rules of inference apply to both. (One of the first examples that Blackburn uses to demonstrate his logic of attitudes is Hume's dispute between the young man who prefers Ovid and the old man who prefers Tacitus.) But this assumption might be mistaken.

Different types of attitudes can be distinguished according to their inferential roles. There is an inferential operation that governs one type of attitude, which arguably includes most of the attitudes we consider moral, but not another, which arguably includes much of what we think of as aesthetic attitudes. If this distinction proves sound, the problem for the expressivist is not yet solved, but a new strategy for solution opens up. Different types of attitudes might appropriately be considered different by expressivists according to their distinctive inferential roles.

Such a solution, if it worked, would not be of interest only to expressivists. Realists who distinguish between different types of evaluative attitudes according to the type of properties to which those attitudes refer might also want to account for phenomenological differences in the attitudes themselves that are not easily explained by looking at the attitudes' referents. It is quite consistent with holding that aesthetic and moral attitudes differ in the properties to which they refer that one also find qualitative differences in the two sorts of attitudes not reducible to their referents.

3. Compliant and recalcitrant attitudes

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According to expressivism, there is an important distinction between a normative attitude and a mere liking or preference: judging that something is good or bad is not the same as expressing one's likes or inclinations. Here "attitude" refers to the state of norm acceptance, and a "judgment" is the expression of an attitude. To make a judgment is to express a consciously held attitude with a distinctive psychological role. The difference between an attitude and a mere inclination is illuminated by Allan Gibbard's discussion of the difference between accepting a norm and internalizing one. The former is characterized by a disposal to avow that norm under the right circumstances.¹⁴ The latter is characterized by propensities to act and feel in certain ways. Accepting a norm is a conscious process; internalizing one need not be, and we are sometimes even unaware of what norms we have internalized. Thus, we are generally aware of our own attitudes, and we are disposed to avow them.

There are also different *orders* of attitudes. Some attitudes take as their objects actions, states of affairs, and the like; yet others take as their objects other attitudes. Call the latter higher-order attitudes. So the view can account for a complex of interrelated but distinct psychological states: for example, a person might find that she is in the grip of an aversion to displays of affection by gays and lesbians, judge that such affection is not only permissible but (in the right circumstances) laudatory, and also have a higher-order attitude that her first-order attitude is the right one for everyone to have, and thus that it should be encouraged.

One might object that there can be no second-order aesthetic attitudes, because an attitude whose object is an attitude cannot correctly be described as aesthetic in character. It seems odd to call an attitude beautiful or ugly. Perhaps the notion of a second-order aesthetic attitude can be better understood by thinking about personal ideals. In reflecting on what kind of person we would like to be, it is natural to endorse a view about the *kind* of attitudes we'd like to have.¹⁵ In the moral case, we might look to a religious or cultural tradition, or to a role

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model, and endorse the aim of adopting the sort of attitudes that fit that person or tradition.

These ideals, once adopted, have implications. Endorsing a set of moral ideals based on Tibetan Buddhist teaching implies various second-order attitudes, such as the attitude that our moral attitudes ought to accord with those teachings. While the notion of a set of aesthetic ideals is less familiar, it is hardly unheard of. A student of art history or music criticism might look to a critical tradition like formalism or structuralism, or to a particular critic whose aesthetic sensibility he admires (perhaps one of Hume's "men of delicate taste"), and adopt the attitude that his own aesthetic attitudes could be improved by bringing them into harmony with this tradition or critical viewpoint. This would then bring about a whole host of second-order attitudes about particular attitudes he already holds: his attitudes about the merits of particular artworks now come under intense self-scrutiny. Not all second-order attitudes are based in ideals, but many are.

The distinction that can help to mark off moral from aesthetic attitudes is a distinction in the kind of inferences that are permissible between second-order and first-order attitudes. Two examples will serve to illustrate. First, consider Adam, who judges that torture is always morally wrong, but who has a higher-order attitude which says that attitudes that do not allow exceptions in cases where the consequences of complying with those attitudes are worse than not doing so are wrong. So, he judges that his condemnation of torture is only worth hanging onto if the practice of torture always produces worse consequences than the alternatives. If he comes to believe that the practice of torture sometimes produces better consequences than the alternatives, then he will form a second-order attitude of disapproval towards his first-order condemnation of torture. Adam's attitudes will be in conflict.

Second, consider Betty, who has read and taken to heart David Hume's essay "On the Standard of Taste." Before reading Hume, she read both Ogilby and Milton, and she judged

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Ogilby to be the better writer. After reading Hume, she consults the opinions of literary experts, and finds that Milton is universally judged by them to be superior to Ogilby. Betty is convinced of the soundness of Hume's account of aesthetic expertise, and she comes to think of her own attitude towards Ogilby as clashing with this view of the kind of reader she ought to be. So, Betty forms an attitude of disapproval towards her own aesthetic attitude towards Ogilby. Both Adam and Betty have the same sort of conflict between a lower-order and higher-order attitude. We might represent these pairs this way, borrowing Blackburn's notation¹⁶:

Adam: $\langle B!(T); B!(|B!(T)|) \rangle$

and

Betty: $\langle H!(O); B!(|H!(O)|) \rangle$

Call attitude pairs like those in our two examples *cross-purposed*. Being at cross-purposes means that one member of the pair takes the other as its object, and it expresses *disapproval* of its object. This disapproval, further, is of a particular kind. It is not simply that Adam takes his condemnation of torture to be imprudent; his attitude is that it is not consistent with the best view of what is morally permissible. Similarly, Betty's attitude is that her taking Ogilby to be a great writer is at odds with what she takes to be the best kind of literary attitude. In each case, the higher-order attitude makes reference to a moral or aesthetic ideal up to which the lower-order fails to measure. In such cases, the higher-order and lower-order attitudes are at cross-purposes.

In cases like Adam's, it is clear how the conflict should be resolved. His higher-order attitude has normative authority over his lower-order attitude. An analogy might be given to an epistemic case. A person who believes that natural selection is incorrect but who comes to believe that this belief is ill-founded should give up the former belief, not the latter.¹⁷ Similarly, Adam would be right to drop his condemnation of torture, in light of his higher-order rejection

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of that attitude. In these cases, call the lower-order member of the pair *compliant*, and call the eradication of the lower-order attitude by the higher *compliance*.

In other cases, however, it is not at all clear which member of the pair should be given up.¹⁸ Betty, who judges Ogilby to be superior to Milton, but disapproves of that attitude, does not seem to be required to give up her admiring attitude towards Ogilby. Call attitudes like hers *recalcitrant*. The basic difference between compliant and recalcitrant attitudes is that when a compliant attitude is a member of a cross-purposed pair, it is appropriately abandoned in favor of its higher-order counterpart when the pair is recognized by the agent as being at cross-purposes. When a recalcitrant attitude is a member of a cross-purposed pair, it need not be given up. So for Adam:

$\langle B!(T); B!(|B!(T)|) \rangle$ should become $\langle \sim B!(T); B!(|B!(T)|) \rangle$ ¹⁹

but for Betty

$\langle H!(O); B!(|H!(O)|) \rangle$ need not change.

This is because 'B!(T)' is compliant, and 'H!(O)' is recalcitrant.

Compliance can be read normatively or functionally. It might be understood in terms of how in fact our minds usually handle such conflicts: a lower-order attitude is simply transformed by a higher-order attitude. This claim might be correct. But, more importantly for our purposes, compliance can also be given a normative reading: that is, compliance is one of the rules that governs how we *should* manage our attitudes. The normative reading is the pertinent one here.

One might question whether compliance thus described is properly called an inference. $\langle \sim B!(T); B!(|B!(T)|) \rangle$ is not the *logical consequence* of $\langle B!(T); B!(|B!(T)|) \rangle$. Here it is important to recognize the difference between rules of inference in the logic governing ordinary propositions and the rules governing a logic of attitudes. Blackburn introduces the logic of

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attitudes as a means of allowing rules like *modus ponens* to operate on complex attitudes, but he does not limit the norms that govern the manipulation of attitudes to those norms that model standard rules of logic. Rather, the aim of the logic of attitudes is to explain how norms governing attitudes can model those norms that govern belief in such a way as to serve *truth*, which include, but are not limited to, the norms of formal logic. These norms, then, are not only logical but also epistemic (or, better, quasi-logical and quasi-epistemic). Blackburn writes:

In short, E_{ex} [the language of attitudes] needs to become an instrument of serious, reflective, evaluative practice, able to express concern for improvements, clashes, implications, and coherence of attitudes. Now one way of doing this is to become like ordinary English. That is, it would invent a predicate answering to the attitude and treat commitments as if they were judgements, and then use all the natural devices for debating truth.²⁰

The norms that lead us to change one attitude in light of another include not only norms aiming for consistency or for drawing out logical consequence but also norms for “improvement” and against “clashes.” So an expressivist might indeed want a way to resolve a cross-purposed pair.

4. Moral attitudes are complaint and aesthetic attitudes are recalcitrant

Two claims need to be defended if compliance is to serve as a basis for a distinction between attitude types: that compliance is a norm for cross-purposed moral attitude pairs, and that it is not for aesthetic pairs. The first claim is relatively uncontroversial. First, in cases of cross-purposed moral attitudes, motivational conflicts often emerge. The person who adopts the second-order attitude is *moved* (to some extent) to act: to express disapproval of the object attitude, and to remove it. Possession of the first-order attitude, however, predisposes one to avow it. There are many situations where this can lead to a conflict in behavior – the kinds of

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conflict that make for much of the substance of the film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, for example. The normative force of compliance is in part derived from the practical benefits of resolving one's cross-purposed moral attitudes.

Second, the phenomenology of resolving cross-purposed moral attitudes has much in common with the phenomenology of drawing a conclusion in a valid argument. The phenomenology here is distinctive, even if not easy to describe. The change in attitudes characteristic of compliance is experienced as *involuntary*; the higher-order attitude is felt as *requiring* the change; and conscious resistance to changing the lower-order attitude, insofar as it is successful, creates psychic conflict.²¹ All of these features are present when drawing a conclusion from an argument understood and believed to be sound. For these reasons, compliance is rightly viewed as a norm for a wide range of moral attitudes.

It is the lower-order attitude, and not the higher-order, that succumbs to this normative pressure because higher-order attitudes are more closely identified with the person as agent. On a familiar, Frankfurt-style view of moral psychology, higher-order attitudes are thought to reflect better the agent's "true" preferences with which she identifies, and so it is better, all things considered, for her actions to issue from those attitudes rather than from lower-order attitudes which might or might not reflect the agent's character.²² In the cases discussed above, where the higher-order attitude itself derives from the agent's attitude towards a set of ideals, the case for *downward* normative force is even stronger.

What about the second claim? If we are willing to grant that there is such a norm as compliance for cross-purposed attitude pairs, why then should some attitudes – the recalcitrant ones – be exempted from the rule? That is, why isn't Betty obligated to alter her first-order attitude towards Ogilby? One reason that aesthetic attitudes seem to be exempt from

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compliance is that they have a special relationship with perceptual experience. A clear statement of this view is made by Richard Wollheim:

... Realism acknowledges a well-entrenched principle in aesthetics, which may be called the Acquaintance Principle, and which insists that judgments of aesthetic value, unlike judgments of moral knowledge, must be based on first-hand experience of their objects ...²³

According to the acquaintance principle, testimony and other forms of indirect acquaintance with an object are perfectly respectable as the grounds for a moral attitude toward that object; they are not respectable as grounds for an aesthetic attitude. That is, while one could be justified in claiming that the torture at Abu Gharib to be morally reprehensible despite never having directly observed it, one could not be similarly justified in claiming that Wagner's operas are musically valueless if one had never heard them.

As stated, the acquaintance principle seems too strong. The view that only perceptual experience can justify an aesthetic attitude is not defensible. First, we sometimes form aesthetic attitudes about objects that cannot be perceived, such as mathematical proofs and, as argued above, aesthetic attitudes themselves. Second, testimony and other forms of indirect acquaintance appropriately guide us not just in choosing what artworks to seek out, but also in forming aesthetic attitudes towards those artworks.²⁴ Still, a weaker form of the acquaintance principle can justify the distinction between moral and aesthetic attitudes. In aesthetics, the normative force of perceptual experience trumps other sorts of justifications with regard to one's aesthetic attitude. That is, trusted testimony can justify one in taking a painting to be beautiful before one has seen it, but if, when one sees it, one sees only ugliness, one's prior attitude should be defeated by the experience. On the other hand, experience of a moral situation does not have the same power to trump other reasons for holding that experience to be

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good or bad. First-hand experience of moral cases certainly does provide some justification for moral attitudes, but one could also be justified in discounting one's own experience of an action as good in favor of prior considerations that count in favor of holding it to be bad. First-hand experience plays a defeating role in justifying aesthetic attitudes that it does not play in justifying moral attitudes.

Reasons play a rather different role in justifying aesthetic attitudes than they do in justifying moral attitudes. In the moral case, even first-order attitudes are grounded in reasons of the same sort that inform second-order moral attitudes. The reasons that warrant disapproval of disapproval of torture are also relevant to the disapproval of torture itself. By contrast, first-order aesthetic attitudes are curiously insensitive to reasons of this kind: the sorts of things that clearly count in favor of disapproving of one's positive attitude towards Ogilby do not directly support a disapproving attitude towards Ogilby. Betty's second-order attitude is grounded in her admiration of an aesthetic ideal – a picture of what kind of reader she would like to be. But Betty's *first-order* attitude towards Ogilby need not be moved by such considerations.

In fact, some philosophers doubt that there are ever any *reasons* at all that one can cite for or against an aesthetic attitude. In an oft-cited article, Arnold Isenberg claims that, in critical discourse, one's *reason* for valuing a work of art, if taken in its ordinary sense, "never adds the slightest weight to V [the verdict]." ²⁵ Instead, in an aesthetic context, the function of the "reason" is merely to help us achieve a "second moment of aesthetic experience." ²⁶ Isenberg argues that first-order aesthetic attitudes are not sensitive to reasons that are not also part of the experience of the object.

Consider an objection. If Betty judges that that her own favorable attitude towards Ogilby is bad, Betty must believe that she has good reasons for this second-order attitude.

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Betty's second-order attitude is an *attitude*, consciously and deliberately affirmed, so Betty must believe that she has reasons for it. In this case, Betty must believe that her personal ideals are a sound basis for forming attitudes about whether she should esteem Ogilby. On the other hand, since Betty does hold that Ogilby is a good writer, she must also believe that she has good reason for this first-order attitude. That is, Betty must believe that her own experience of reading Ogilby is a sound basis for forming attitudes concerning whether she should esteem Ogilby. Betty must believe both that personal ideals and that first-hand experience constitute proper grounds for forming first-order aesthetic attitudes. Hence, Betty has inconsistent beliefs, and this inconsistency can generate normative pressure to give up one of the two cross-purposed attitudes.

However, it's not clear that Betty will form these inconsistent beliefs. Betty's adopting the second-order attitude implies that she gives *some* weight to her personal ideals as a basis for forming first-order attitudes, and her adopting the first-order attitude implies that she gives *some* weight to her own experience of art. Nothing implies that she gives either consideration exclusive weight. In adopting her second-order attitude, Betty might not give any thought to the role of first-hand experience. When she turns to read Ogilby, however, she recognizes and endorses the importance of her first-hand experience in forming her attitudes about a writer's literary merit, but she does not consider whether her personal ideals ought also to have a say. In the normal case, we do not deliberate perfectly, and we often adopt attitudes without thinking through all of the considerations that we would on reflection agree ought to count in our decision-making. So it is perfectly plausible that Betty would not form the conflicting beliefs when she adopts her cross-purposed attitudes.

It is, however, possible that Betty might deliberate very carefully and come to form contradictory beliefs about the relative importance of first-hand experience and following

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personal ideals in adopting aesthetic attitudes. In such a case, Betty certainly will experience normative pressure to give up one of those beliefs, and thus one of those attitudes. But this normative pressure would be different than the pressure that Adam feels. First, there is still no clear indication of which of the two beliefs ought to be given up; neither of the two beliefs is of a higher-order than the other. Second, the normative pressure in the moral case is independent of these sorts of beliefs. Adam might fail to deliberate fully in forming his attitudes, and thus might fail to form the contradictory beliefs implied by his cross-purposed attitudes. But even in the absence of conflicting beliefs about the reasons for his attitudes, Adam's higher-order attitude will put pressure on his lower-order attitude. This is not the case for Betty.

If this is right, Betty seems to be stuck with a problem. The fact that her attitudes are cross-purposed suggests that she experiences at least some psychological conflict. If she is not supposed to alter her first-order attitude, what should she do to resolve the conflict? She might give up her second-order attitude, but she does not seem to be required to do so. On the other hand, aesthetic conflicts are tolerable in a way that moral conflicts are not. There is no vocabulary for aesthetic obligation or aesthetic dilemmas.²⁷ We are not often forced to make difficult choices between differing aesthetic attitudes, and when we are, the consequences of such choices are not as serious as they are in the moral case. So Betty might simply live with the conflict – perhaps, if Emerson was right, her life will be richer for it.²⁸

There is another way in which it can be true that one sometimes ought to revise one's first-order aesthetic attitude in light of a conflicting second-order attitude. As in Pascal's wager, Betty's adopting her second-order attitude might well lead her to spend so much time examining, studying, and learning about Milton's works that gradually and with time, her first-order attitude concerning the relative merits of Ogilby and Milton does change. (Perhaps she could even follow Pascal's advice and begin by *pretending* to judge Milton to be the superior

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writer.) But this is not a case of cross-purposed attitudes. Rather, in these cases, an attitude adopted according to norms of one kind is transformed because of a higher-level attitude regulated by norms of a different sort. In Pascal's case, a belief adopted for epistemic reasons is transformed by an attitude adopted for prudential reasons. This kind of transformation can and does sometimes happen, but it does not show the first-order attitude to be compliant. The gradual, indirect transformation of one attitude by another in these Pascal-like cases is mediated by the acquisition of new behaviors and experiences that produce the change in attitude. What is called for in compliance is a transformation unmediated by these kinds of activities.

First-order aesthetic attitudes are not normatively required to comply with their second-order counterparts, while first-order moral attitudes are appropriately governed by the norm of compliance. So the expressivist can distinguish between these two types of attitudes according to whether the norm of compliance applies to them, and this distinction can help explain why it is that people see moral and aesthetic attitudes as different kinds of states.

5. Conclusions

One advantage of this account is that it explains some hard cases on the border between moral and aesthetic attitudes. Consider one of Blackburn's examples:

...[T]ake the actual case in which an advertising concern hatched the plan of putting a disk into space, about the apparent size of the moon, on which advertising slogans and images would be generated ... One would feel contaminated, polluted, by belonging to a culture in which such a thing could be thought of. Aesthetic revulsion blends seamlessly here into moral revulsion.²⁹

Blackburn's view is that there is no firm distinction between aesthetic attitudes and moral attitudes, and this example is intended to illustrate it. However, the distinction between moral and aesthetic attitudes can be shown to hold even in such cases. Suppose that this disk is

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manufactured, orbited, and viewed. A viewer's attitude towards it is moral only if it is governed by her higher-order moral attitudes. If the viewer's attitude is based on her direct observation of the disk, and not governed by her higher-order commitments about, for example, the kind of culture of which she approves, then we have reason to say that her attitude is aesthetic. Suppose she experiences the disk as rather striking and grandly beautiful; such an attitude might persist in the face of conflicting higher-order moral attitudes. This is not to say that there is never any ambiguity in the language we use to talk about moral and aesthetic attitudes, or that moral attitudes do not sometimes concern objects that we usually set aside for aesthetic appreciation, and *vice versa*.

Take the attitude that something or someone is 'sentimental'. To judge that a story is sentimental is to express attitudes both about how the story is told – we find the writing trite or the descriptions excessive --, and about the moral themes of the story – we find that the good characters to be romanticized and the evil ones easily defeated.³⁰ Attitudes that something is sentimental, taken as a class, are not all recalcitrant or all compliant. But it does not follow from this that an individual attitude of this kind is not one or the other. Suppose Colin does not find Coleridge's poem "To a Young Ass" sentimental, but he learns that others do, and comes to judge that he ought to. Either his first-order attitude will be compliant or it will be recalcitrant, because he will either feel pressure to infer a change in that attitude or he will not. Debbie might adopt the same pair of attitudes and have the opposite result. This does not mean that only one of them truly judged that "To a Young Ass" was sentimental; it merely means that Debbie's and Colin's attitudes differ with respect to the role they play in their psychologies. We might want to say that for one, the attitude is aesthetic, and for the other, it is moral.

The strategy outlined in this paper is not complete. The expressivist needs a way of individuating *each* attitude type: moral, prudential, aesthetic, and perhaps gustatory, humor,

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and others.³¹ Attitudes of prudence, like moral attitudes, seem to be compliant; humor and gustatory attitudes (if they are actually *attitudes*) appear recalcitrant. So the distinction between recalcitrance and compliance cannot by itself solve the attitude type individuation problem. The task of distinguishing between moral and prudential attitudes seems particularly important, since some of the objections to the emotion-based account exploit its (alleged) inability to distinguish the two.

It does seem possible to make a distinction between moral and prudential attitudes in inferential terms. A quick sketch suggests one difference. Moral attitudes, but not prudential attitudes, license a form of universal generalization. Take a generic attitude $H!(P)$. If $H!(P)$ is moral, then the following implication seems valid. (O_{ab} is the relation that a ought to adopt attitude b.)

$$H!(P) \text{ implies } H! \mid (x)O_{x \mid H!(P)} \mid$$

If $H!(P)$ is prudential, the inference does not hold. One way that we distinguish between attitudes of prudence and moral attitudes is by looking at the conclusions we draw from them in the attitudes we form about other people. Moral attitudes license us to form like attitudes about the behavior and the attitudes of other people; prudential attitudes do not.

The foregoing is suggestive, not conclusive, and needs refinement. There might be various sub-species of both moral and prudential attitudes, and some other attitude types have not yet been accounted for. The point is that an inferential strategy has the resources to make further plausible distinctions between attitude types based on the roles they play in our psychologies.

Other features beyond strictly inferential features might be used to supplement the inferential account. Perhaps the motivational and normative force exerted by moral attitudes is stronger than that possessed by other types of attitudes. We need not reject entirely the

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emotion-based solutions discussed earlier; we might use emotions or physiological responses to further individuate two different attitude types that share all their inferential features in common. For example, if there are gustatory and humor attitudes (as opposed to mere likings), then it is plausible that they might be quite similar inferentially, yet be distinguished by their typical emotional and physiological accompaniments.

The attitude type individuation problem is a serious one: expressivists need to explain why common sense sorts normative attitudes into different kinds. One important part of the answer lies in the different inferential roles that different attitudes have in our mental economy: some comply with their counterpart second-order attitudes, some do not, while still others might have no second-order counterparts. The inferential qualities of attitudes differ in ways that mirror our everyday distinctions between attitude types to a remarkable degree.

* Many thanks to Nishi Shah, Derek Matravers, and three anonymous referees for this *Journal* for highly valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper. The corrections and improvements that they suggested were so numerous that to notate them individually would be cumbersome. While the author alone is responsible for the weaknesses that remain in the paper, credit for whatever virtues the paper possesses must be shared with these thoughtful commentators.

¹ Alexander Miller calls it the “moral attitude problem.” See Miller, *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), pp. 43-51, 88-94, and 108-9.

² D’Arms, Justin, and Jacobson, Daniel, “Expressivism, Morality, and the Emotions,” *Ethics* 104 (July 1994): 740.

³ For example, see A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, 2nd ed. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1948), pp. 113-114.

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⁴ Simon Blackburn, *Ruling Passions: A Theory of Practical Reasoning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 14.

⁵ Miller (*op. cit.*), p. 93.

⁶ Gibbard, Allan, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 42. Later, Gibbard modifies this account somewhat, but the changes he makes are not relevant to the objections considered here.

⁷ Jesse Prinz defended a link between aesthetic appreciation and the emotion of wonder in his “Emotion and Aesthetic Value,” presented at the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting in San Francisco, CA, in April 2007. Prinz is not an expressivist; on his view, aesthetic claims *refer* to emotions, rather than expressing them. However, an expressivist might well want to pick up on his use of wonder to extend the emotion-type strategy.

⁸ This is a simplification of a more detailed argument. See D’Arms and Jacobson, *op. cit.*, and also their “Sentiment and Value,” *Ethics* 110 (July 2000): 722-748.

⁹ Nichols, Shaun, *Sentimental Rules: On the Natural Foundations of Moral Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Chapter 4, “Philosophical Sentimentalism,” pp. 83-96. Allan Gibbard replies to Nichols in “Moral Feelings and Moral Concepts,” in Shafer-Landau, Russ (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Vol. 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 195-217. His reply consists in part in moving from an emphasis on *guilt* to an emphasis on *outrage*.

¹⁰ See Blackburn (*op. cit.*), “Guilt, Shame, and the Rejection of Ethics,” pp. 14-21. Blackburn does not intend this argument as an objection to Gibbard’s account.

¹¹ Thus, the strategy here shares an affinity with Matthew Chrisman’s approach of defining expressivism in terms of the kinds of inferences licensed by attitudes. See Chrisman,

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“Expressivism, Inferentialism, and Saving the Debate” forthcoming in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.

¹² The classic approaches here are: Blackburn, Simon, *Spreading the Word: Groundings in the Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), Chapter 6, “Evaluations, Projections, and Quasi-Realism,” pp. 181-223; Gibbard, Allan (1990), Chapter 5, “Normative Logic,” pp. 83-104. In response to an avalanche of criticism, both Blackburn and Gibbard have offered modifications to these accounts in more recent work.

¹³ So called by Simon Blackburn. The point was made by Peter Geach, though he attributed the idea to Frege. See P.T. Geach, “Assertion,” *Philosophical Review* 74 (1965): 221-225.

¹⁴ See Gibbard (1990), pp. 73-75.

¹⁵ Such endorsement would constitute a third-order attitude.

¹⁶ See Blackburn (1984), Chapter 6.

¹⁷ The principle invoked here might have exceptions. If a single-higher order belief seemed to require abandoning a large class of settled first-order beliefs, one might reasonably think that the higher-order belief might be outweighed, or at least that it might need to be more strongly confirmed before making the change.

¹⁸ Or perhaps that either should be. Ted Cohen considers this stronger claim in his “On Consistency in One’s Personal Aesthetics,” in Jerrold Levinson (ed.), *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 106-125.

¹⁹ There is a further complication here. The semantics of $\sim B!(T)$ are a matter of fierce debate, since negation has proven to be the most difficult operation for expressivists to account for.

This difficulty is independent of the problem that is the topic of this paper. For some recent work on this problem, see James Dreier, “Negation for Expressivists: A Collection of Problems

with a Suggestion for their Solution,” in Shafer-Landau (*op. cit.*), pp. 217-234; Michael Ridge, “Ecumenical Expressivism: Finessing Frege,” *Ethics* 116: 302-336; Mark Schroeder, “How Expressivists Can and Should Solve Their Problem with Negation,” forthcoming in *Noûs*.

²⁰ Blackburn (1984), p. 195.

²¹ For a discussion of this issue, and a larger discussion of the phenomenology of forming moral attitudes, see Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, “Moral Phenomenology and Moral Theory,” in Ernest Sosa and Enrique Villanueva (eds.), *Philosophical Issues 15: Normativity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 56-77.

²² See Frankfurt, Harry, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5-20, and “The Importance of What We Care About,” *Synthese* 53 (1982): 257-272.

²³ Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1980), p. 233.

²⁴ The view that testimony can provide at least some justification for aesthetic attitudes has been defended by Aaron Meskin, in “Aesthetic Testimony: What Can We Learn from Others about Beauty and Art?” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 69 (2004): 65-91; Malcolm Budd, “The Acquaintance Principle,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43 (2003): 386-392; and Robert Hopkins, “Beauty and Testimony,” in Anthony O’Hear (ed.), *Philosophy, the Good, the True, and the Beautiful* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 2000), pp. 209-236.

²⁵ Arnold Isenberg, “Critical Communication,” *Philosophical Review* 58 (1949): p. 338.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 341.

²⁷ Marcia Muelder Eaton cites some counterexamples in her “Serious Problems, Serious Values: Aesthetic Dilemmas” (in her *Merit, Aesthetic and Ethical* (New York: Oxford University Press,

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2001), Chapter Six, pp. 70-80). But nothing she says there suggests that aesthetic obligations are as commonplace or as serious as moral ones.

²⁸ For a more detailed discussion of these issues, see Cohen (*op. cit.*).

²⁹ Blackburn (1998), p. 12.

³⁰ See Marcia Muelder Eaton, "Laughing at the Death of Little Nell: Sentimental Art and Sentimental People," *American Philosophical Quarterly* (1989) 26: 269-282.

³¹ These last categories are problematic. It is not clear whether we have *attitudes* about whether something is funny or tasty, or whether we simply have likes and dislikes. This author doubts that we do, but the issue is far from clear. For a discussion of the issues regarding the former, see Noël Carroll, "Humour," in Jerrold Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 344-365.