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## WHAT IS MORAL JUDGMENT?\*

We speak, reason, and feel as if moral knowledge is possible, yet this idea confronts a serious, well-known problem. The problem is so central to meta-ethics that one philosopher regards it as *the* moral problem in ethical theory.<sup>1</sup> Moral knowledge appears to require moral judgments to be states of belief, yet they must at the same time be states of desire and feeling if they embody the motivation that we feel when we make moral judgments. How can the same judgment be a state of belief and a state of desire or feeling, simultaneously?

More exactly, the problem is the logical incompatibility between three intuitively plausible propositions about (the nonempty<sup>2</sup> domain of) moral judgments.<sup>3</sup> First, there is the seemingly unobjectionable view:

- (1) Moral judgments are (or express<sup>4</sup>) states of belief.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> On the usual interpretation of universal propositions, (1), (2), and (3) are inconsistent only if there are moral judgments. That we make moral judgments, given a neutral characterization of them, has never been in dispute and I will assume it throughout.

<sup>3</sup> I intend 'judgment' to be neutral between cognitivist and noncognitivist interpretations of moral thought. Readers who prefer 'thought' or 'response' or some other term for this purpose can replace 'judgment' throughout. Nothing depends on its precise connotations.

<sup>4</sup> 'Judgment' can refer to either a mental state or language expressing that state. I focus on the first case and discuss judgments as linguistic expressions only in section VI. I argue there that the problem and its resolution are essentially the same either way.

<sup>5</sup> Beliefs always have truth value as I use the term, but noncognitivists are free to deny that moral judgments are ever beliefs in this sense.

Anyone who holds that moral judgments sometimes embody moral knowledge would be committed to this proposition on pain of denying that moral knowledge entails moral belief. Unfortunately, this commonsense view conflicts with two widely accepted views of moral motivation often attributed to Hume.<sup>6</sup> First, anyone who genuinely makes a moral judgment about something feels positively or negatively about what is judged in virtue of the intrinsic normative force of the judgment and is motivated (to some degree) to be guided by the moral judgment, independently of any antecedent desires or feelings that may also be sources of feeling and motivation. More simply:

- (2) Moral judgments always move the judger intrinsically, independently of antecedent desires and feelings.

Second, mere beliefs, independently of desires and feelings, never motivate; when beliefs move us, they do so because we also have antecedent desires and feelings and our beliefs elicit our responses, given those desires and feelings. Again, more simply:

- (3) Beliefs never move the believer intrinsically, independently of antecedent desires and feelings.

Obviously, if there are any moral judgments, these three views taken together lead to contradiction. The problem for the defender of moral knowledge is thus to explain which of the two Humean tenets about the nature of motivation should be surrendered. It is at the same time a problem about making sense of moral judgment, since we do make moral judgments yet our conception of moral judgment in relation to belief and motivation appears to entail a contradiction.<sup>7</sup>

This problem may be resolved, I shall contend, by understanding moral judgments to be complex, multifunctional states that normally comprise *both* states of belief that represent possible moral truths *and* states of emotion and motivation.<sup>8</sup> The position that I propose is not

<sup>6</sup> Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, L.A. Selby-Bigge, ed. (New York: Oxford, 1978), pp. 413–18, 455–76.

<sup>7</sup> The problem can be stated also by replacing (2) and (3) with: “Moral judgments are, just by themselves, reasons to act” and “Beliefs are never, just by themselves, reasons to act.” Since ‘reasons to act’ must mean motivating reasons to act for the claims to be plausible, the difference is largely verbal and the resolution that I propose works for both versions.

<sup>8</sup> I first floated this view in my *Illusions of Paradox* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), pp. 169–75. I apply a preliminary version of it to Hume’s moral philosophy in “The Problem of Moral Judgment,” in Susan Sherwin and Peter K. Schotch, eds., *Engaged Philosophy: Essays in Honour of David Braybrooke* (Toronto: University Press, 2007), pp. 249–69.

to be confused with the problematic view that moral judgments are ontologically unique states (“besires”<sup>9</sup>) that are *necessarily* both beliefs and desires. I contend, on the contrary, that a naturalized, multi-functional understanding of moral judgment offers a defensible alternative to “internalist” accounts of moral judgment (such as the besire theory) as well as to the standard “externalist” treatments. Moreover, it offers an alternative perspective on the cognitive role of moral emotion in moral knowledge. In sum, I oppose the false opposition between reason and emotion that has been with us since Plato and has not been resolved by either internalist or externalist versions of moral realism.

I will be taking moral realism as the default position in ethical theory, since it agrees with common sense (we speak and think as if moral knowledge is possible) and is backed by powerful theoretical considerations that are amply rehearsed in the literature.<sup>10</sup> However, the understanding of moral judgment that I defend is neutral between moral realism and error theory, the view that moral judgments have truth value but none are true due to a systematic error that is necessarily a part of moral thinking.<sup>11</sup> The reason is that moral realism and error theory face the same conundrum. They are both committed to cognitivism and hence must cope with the inference from plausible premises (2) and (3) to the denial of (1).<sup>12</sup> If my understand-

<sup>9</sup> The term is introduced in J.E.J. Altham, “The Legacy of Emotivism,” in Graham MacDonald and Crispin Wright, eds., *Fact, Science, and Morality* (New York: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 275–88, on p. 284. Margaret Olivia Little subtly defends the besire version of internalism in her “Virtue as Knowledge: Objections from the Philosophy of Mind,” *Noûs*, xxxi (1997): 59–79.

<sup>10</sup> David Copp elaborates these reasons in *Morality, Normativity, and Society* (New York: Oxford, 1995), pp. 15–19. A complementary understanding of moral realism is given by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, “Introduction: The Many Moral Realisms,” in Sayre-McCord, ed., *Essays on Moral Realism* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1988), pp. 1–23. I review the literature in my “Moral Epistemology,” in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2003 Edition on the Internet).

<sup>11</sup> J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Penguin, 1977); Richard T. Garner, “On the Genuine Queerness of Moral Properties and Facts,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, LXVIII (1990): 137–46; Stephen Schiffer, “Meaning and Value,” this JOURNAL, LXXXVII, 11 (November 1990): 602–14; Richard Joyce, *The Myth of Morality* (New York: Cambridge, 2001); Hallvard Lillehammer, “Moral Error Theory,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, CIV (2004): 93–109; Mark Kalderon, *Moral Fictionalism* (New York: Oxford, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Kalderon’s error theory may be an exception. Although he takes the content of moral judgment to have a truth value and to be false, acceptance of a moral judgment is given a noncognitivist interpretation. Nevertheless, if his theory implies that moral judgments are not beliefs, it goes against the intuitions backing (1), and if it implies (1) then, whether or not we call it “moral cognitivism,” the theory evidently contradicts (2) and (3).

ing of moral judgment resolves the problem for moral realism, it does it for error theory as well.<sup>13</sup>

#### I. AGAINST EXTERNALIST MORAL REALISM

A well-established strategy for defending moral realism is to argue that (2), despite its evident appeal, is really false and that moral realism need not accept it. The connection between moral judgment and felt motivation, it is argued, is mediated by the presence of antecedent desires and feelings that are “external” to the judgment itself. In fact, the naturalistic accounts of moral authority characteristically adopt this externalist perspective on the nature of moral motivation and feeling.<sup>14</sup> I will argue, however, that the externalist solution to the problem of the inconsistent triad is not satisfactory, at least not as this approach is usually conceived, and therefore a different solution must be found for moral realism.

What is externalism? The distinction between “internalism” and “externalism” was introduced in 1947 by W.D. Falk to distinguish between two opposing conceptions of the relation between moral judgments and motivation.<sup>15</sup> While internalism conceives their relation to be necessary, externalism denies that it is.<sup>16</sup> But to think of the distinction as comprised of two mutually exclusive and exhaustive views of moral judgment leaves out the positive view of externalism contained in contemporary accounts. Externalists reject the internalist claim that the relation between moral judgment and motivation is necessary because they conceive of moral motivation being mediated by desires and feelings that exist prior to the moral judgment and that explain instrumentally why moral

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted the problem for error theory is especially acute if error theory incorporates Mackie’s reasoning that moral judgments imply that there exist properties that are intrinsically motivating and thus imply what is ontologically unacceptable from Mackie’s perspective, for then his theory implies (2) and (3). At least it does if we include in his scientific perspective Bayesian theories of motivation and recent work on brain functioning as analyzed in Timothy Schroeder, *Three Faces of Desire* (New York: Oxford, 2004), pp. 157–61.

<sup>14</sup> For example: David Gauthier, *Morals by Agreement* (New York: Oxford, 1986); Peter Railton, “Moral Realism,” *The Philosophical Review*, xciv (1986): 163–207; Copp, *Morality, Normativity, and Society*.

<sup>15</sup> Falk, “Ought and Motivation,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, N. S. XLVIII (1947–48): 11–38.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Sidgwick, *The Method of Ethics* (Chicago: University Press, 1907); William K. Frankena, “Obligation and Motivation in Recent Moral Philosophy,” in A.I. Melden, ed., *Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Seattle: Washington UP, 1958), pp. 40–81; David O. Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (New York: Cambridge, 1989); Sigrun Svavarsdottir, “Moral Cognitivism and Motivation,” *The Philosophical Review*, cviii (1999): 161–219.

judgments normally have motivating force. For example, if what is just promotes what we antecedently care about, the fact that something is just gives us an instrumental reason to care about it. Conceding that moral judgments motivate, externalism understands the source of moral motivation to lie outside the moral facts themselves and thus outside the content of moral judgments. The two views are thus contraries rather than contradictories. It is possible, at least logically, for both to be false, since it is possible for the relation between judgment and motivation to be neither necessary nor merely instrumental.

Externalists employ two strategies to establish their position. One is to argue that the relation in question is not necessary and infer that externalism is true since it explains moral motivation without implying that the relation is necessary. The other is to defend the instrumental explanation of moral motivation, noting that it excludes internalism. As it turns out, neither strategy is successful in avoiding inconsistency.

The first strategy relies on imagining cases where a moral judgment is true (or at least is sincerely believed to be true) but the judger has no motivation of the required kind. Insofar as such cases are possible the relation between judgment and motivation cannot be necessary. A standard example is that of the amoralist who concedes that what he has done is morally reprehensible but just does not give a damn.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Thrasymachus urges those who can get away with it to be unjust, knowing full well exactly what it is to be just but having no desire to be just.<sup>18</sup> While such examples may be counterexamples to (2), this proposition can be modified in a way that completely nullifies the force of the examples and leaves (1) as problematic as before. Suppose that normally, but not always, anyone who genuinely makes a moral judgment feels its intrinsic normative force and is motivated (to some degree) to be guided by the moral judgment, independently of any other desires or feelings that the person may possess. More simply:

(2\*) Normally, moral judgments move the judger intrinsically, independently of antecedent desires and feelings.

Notice that (1), the presupposition of moral realism, is just as inconsistent with the (2\*) and (3) as it is with (2) and (3), but the

<sup>17</sup> Brink, *Moral Realism*, pp. 46–47.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Sturgeon argues convincingly that it is difficult to make sense of such amorality without supposing that there are moral facts; see “What Difference Does It Make Whether Moral Realism Is True?” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, xxiv Supplement (1986): 115–41. For reasons directly below, accepting this point does not resolve the problem of inconsistency for moral realism.

amoralist presents no problem for (2\*). Moreover, (2\*) being logically weaker than (2), can be no less plausible than (2). In sum, the standard attack on the internalism does nothing to remove the threat of inconsistency facing moral realism. The problem of apparent inconsistency evidently has its source in something other than the idea of a necessary connection between moral judgment and moral motivation. Unless externalist moral realism can deal with this deeper problem, it does not offer a viable alternative to internalism and its putative refutation of internalism is to no avail.

What about the second strategy for defending externalism? As we have already noted, externalism is more than the denial of internalism. It involves a positive thesis that the relation between moral judgment and motivation is instrumental. A representative statement of the thesis is provided by Brink in the course of defending moral realism.

Whether the recognition of moral facts provides reasons for action depends upon whether the agent has reason to do what morality requires. But this, of course, depends upon what morality requires, i.e. upon what the moral facts are, and, at least on standard theories of reasons for action, whether recognition of these facts provides reason for action will depend upon contingent (even if deep) facts about the agents desires or interests.<sup>19</sup>

The instrumental nature of the relation between recognition of moral facts and the agent's desires and interest is well illustrated by Peter Railton's discussion of facts and values.

To deny Hume's thesis of the practicality of moral judgment, and so remove the ground of his contrast between facts and values, is not to deny that morality has an action-guiding character. Morality surely can remain prescriptive within an instrumental framework, and can recommend itself to us in much the same way that, say, epistemology does: various significant and enduring—though perhaps not universal—human ends can be advanced if we apply certain evaluative criteria to our actions.<sup>20</sup>

It is clear that the ends in question are antecedent to moral judgments. Richard Boyd in his influential defense of externalist moral realism makes this point explicit:

Ordinary factual judgments often provide us with reasons for action; they serve as constraints on rational choice. But they do so only because of our antecedent interests and desires. If moral judgments are merely

<sup>19</sup> Brink, "Moral Realism and the Sceptical Arguments from Disagreement and Queerness," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, LXII (1984): 111–25, at p. 114.

<sup>20</sup> Railton, "Moral Realism," p. 170.

factual judgments, as moral realism requires, then the relation of moral judgments to motivation and rationality must be the same.<sup>21</sup>

Moral judgment, in sum, is taken by externalists to be a belief about things like justice that stand in an instrumental relation to other things for which the judge normally has antecedent desires and feelings. Judging something to be just, therefore, normally motivates because the person making the judgment already cares about the consequences of just action.

Notice that externalism, so understood, contradicts not just (2) but also (2\*). For this reason externalism appears to offer a way out of the deeper problem of inconsistency. It does so, however, only if the instrumental thesis is true. I believe that it is not, since it conflicts with reasonable views about moral evolution and moral development.

Set aside for the moment the issue of what a moral judgment is. What is critical for externalism as conceived here is whether the feelings and motives that bring us to act in accord with moral judgment do so on a merely instrumental basis. Many theories exist about how moral emotion and motives might have evolved among humans based on Darwinian natural selection.<sup>22</sup> What I take to be at their core is the thesis that pre-humans had better chances for survival (and reproduction) having moral feelings and motives (or something like them) than not having them. This minimalist claim goes no distance towards explaining the evolution of particular moralities or even particular types of moral-like dispositions to act. All it explains at best is why moral emotion and motivation (or something like them) came to exist or persist.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," in Sayre-McCord, ed., *Essays on Moral Realism*, pp. 181–228, at p. 186.

<sup>22</sup> Most evolutionary accounts attempt to explain the origins of morality, such as Jessica C. Flack and Frans B.M. deWaal, "Any Animal Whatever: Darwinian Building Blocks of Morality in Monkeys and Apes," in Leonard D. Katz, ed., *Evolutionary Origins of Morality* (Bowling Green, OH: Imprint Academic, 2000), pp. 1–29. An alternative evolutionary approach that is particularly appropriate for cultural evolution is epidemiological, looking not at the origins of norms but at why some norms prevail rather than others; see: Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996); and Shaun Nichols, "On the Genealogy of Norms: A Case for Emotion in Cultural Evolution," *Philosophy of Science*, LXIX (2002): 234–55. The minimal assumption about moral evolution set out in this paper allows either approach.

<sup>23</sup> I defend this view in "Can Biology Make Morals Objective?," *Biology and Philosophy*, XI (1996): 21–31. See Alexander Rosenberg, "The Biological Justification of Ethics: A Best-Case Scenario," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, VIII (1990): 86–101, for problems with less minimal attempts at explaining the justification of norms via evolution. A proposal about how motivations to act, triggered by natural features of things, evolve by natural selection to become moral reasons to act is given in Richmond Campbell and Jennifer Woodrow, "Why Moore's Open Question Is Open: The Evolution of Moral Super-venience," *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, XXXVII (2003): 353–72.

But this minimal evolutionary thesis is all I need, given certain very weak assumptions, such as the capacity for developing moral-like motivation and feeling is gene-linked and variation in this capacity occurred when it was important for survival. These assumptions are not beyond question, but they are plausible enough not to call for a special defense.

Even so the core theory may not appear to bear directly on the instrumental nature of moral feeling and motivation implied by externalism. After all, externalists do not deny that moral motivation and feeling exist or that they conduce to survival. Notice, however, that a purely instrumental story of why we tend to act in accord with our moral judgment does not fit even the minimalist account of how moral emotion and motives evolved and is unlikely to explain fully what sustains morals today. That is because the purely instrumental story makes the motivating power of moral judgment too indirect for survival to depend just on it. Other things being equal, natural selection will favor the more reliable means to survival and reproduction, and an indirect mechanism would be to some degree less reliable than the sort described (at the level of phenotype) in (2) or even (2\*<sup>24</sup>).

A purely instrumental mechanism would be less reliable, because its effectiveness would depend on an agent's having true beliefs not only about what to do but also about the causal consequences of doing it. Therefore, the reliability of the moral emotion and motives in causing us to do what we judge right would increase if we were moved to do it just because we perceive it as being right and this motivation did not depend always on perceiving in addition the right causal connection to our antecedent desires and interests. In matters of natural selection incremental differences in reliability can make all the difference, when other things are equal. Other things include the energy costs of the more reliable device and the availability of it (given constraints of mutation and development). The energy costs of a mechanism that directs an agent toward one end should not be significantly different from the costs when another end is the target. Moreover, once emotional and motivational mechanisms are on the scene anyway, the question of availability is not an issue. I conclude that the externalist theory of

<sup>24</sup> Here I adapt the evolutionary argument made by Elliott Sober and David Sloan Wilson in favor of pluralism in the debate about whether we are intrinsically motivated solely by pleasure; see Sober and Wilson, *Unto Others* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1998), chapter 10.

how we are moved morally does not fit well with even very basic evolutionary considerations.

Three caveats are in order. First, normally we are moved intrinsically (to some degree) not only to do what we think is right but also to do things that have (nonmoral) features that we take, other things being equal, to make something right, such as, helping people in need, telling the truth, keeping one's word, and being loyal. But, again, for our moral feelings and motives to be sufficiently effective in moving us to do these things, we need to be moved intrinsically to do these things, not merely to be moved do them because their perceived consequences satisfy our antecedent feelings and desires. Second, it would be folly to deny that moral motivation is in part instrumental. At least by the time we are mature, we normally care about many things that honesty and justice, when practiced generally, tend to promote indirectly, such as the general well-being of others. What I am arguing against is the implausible view that the attraction to being moral and to being just and honest is solely instrumental. Third, it does not follow immediately that moral motivation is today partly noninstrumental given that moral-like motivation was so for early hominoids. Yet it would be entirely gratuitous to suppose that immoral impulses are now relatively weak and we have such strong instrumental reasons to be moral that the capacity for noninstrumental moral motivation is useless or that we can now survive without moral motivation. Neither of the latter hypotheses is at all likely.

Developmental considerations reinforce evolutionary ones and constitute in their own right an argument against the purely instrumental story. We know that early in their development children learn to feel negatively about categories of things that parents teach them are wrong. The psychological means of teaching are blatantly instrumental but the resulting motivation is not. Parents punish providing a negative (instrumental) motive to be good and children naturally want to please their parents so that they also have a positive (instrumental) motive to be good.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, they tend to imitate their parents, being good in ways that they are in order to be like them (again an instrumental motive). But the result over time is that children come to "internalize" the norms that their parents try to instill in them with the result that they normally desire (to some degree) to be good because they find being good attractive in itself. They are, that is to say, motivated to be moral noninstrumentally,

<sup>25</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Development of Children's Orientation toward a Moral Order: 1. Sequence in the Development of Moral Thought," *Vita Humana*, vi (1963): 11-33.

despite the instrumental character of the learning process.<sup>26</sup> If this result is not achieved, so that the child only does what is called for when she cannot get away with doing otherwise or only in order to please or imitate, then the learning process is incomplete and the child is in a significant way handicapped in coping with her social environment. Without the development of a moral conscience she will not be counted on to behave morally except in special circumstances and various things of value, such as being trusted to make her own choices in life, will be foreclosed. These developmental facts are commonplace and entirely consistent with scientific theories of desire that see desire as connected only contingently with belief.<sup>27</sup> Noninstrumental moral motivation, in short, is central to normal moral development, however contingent its relation to moral belief.

That said, there is no question that a child does not forget the instrumental reasons to be moral, and as adults we are still moved to be moral in order to avoid punishment, to be well regarded, and to be like those we admire. We normally develop an empathy with others and are therefore naturally inclined not to cause gratuitous pain. As a pluralist I have no reason to deny any of this, but I believe that the evidence is very strong that people normally have also noninstrumental reasons to do what they believe is right and to be moved intrinsically, for example, not to cause gratuitous pain even when they lack empathy and feel the impulse to cause pain. To be precise, contrary to externalism, (2\*) is evidently true. Anyone who makes a moral judgment normally feels its intrinsic normative force and thereby is motivated (to a degree) to be guided by the judgment, independently of any other desires or feelings.

## II. AGAINST INTERNALIST MORAL REALISM

If (2\*) is acceptable and the moral realist is committed to (1), then it would seem that the moral realist's only option is to reject (3), given the apparent inconsistency among the three propositions. This is the option the internalist realist takes.<sup>28</sup> She understands the relation of

<sup>26</sup> See Schroeder, *Three Faces of Desire*, pp. 146–50, on how intrinsic desires are learned, including the learning of intrinsic desires based on instrumental desires.

<sup>27</sup> Though Schroeder's discussion of the neurobiology of desire in *Three Faces of Desire* supports only a contingent connection between moral belief and the desire to do the right thing (pp. 157–61), the subject is noninstrumental desire, including the moral case.

<sup>28</sup> Defenses of different forms of realist internalism include: John McDowell, "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplement LI (1978): 13–29; Mark Platts, "Moral Reality," in *Essays on Moral Realism*, pp. 282–300; David McNaughton, *Moral Vision* (New York: Blackwell, 1988); James Dreier, "Internalism and Speaker Relativism," *Ethics*, CI (1990): 6–26; and Little, "Virtue as Knowledge: Objections from Philosophy of Mind."

moral judgment to moral motivation to be not only noninstrumental but also necessary, with the consequence that moral beliefs are not motivationally inert, when taken just in themselves, contrary to (3). The burden of this section is to determine if such internalism, committed to the denial of (3), is credible. Do moral beliefs alone necessarily result in moral motivation?

The question is complex because moral realists of this stripe can espouse any one of three kinds of internalism. One claim is that states of moral belief and states of moral motivation are distinct mental processes (or events or states) but that the first entails the second. This form of internalism is evident among moral realists who insist that moral judgments are merely states of belief. David McNaughton, for example, holds this view, since he describes moral judgments as “purely cognitive” states of belief yet understands the judgment to entail motivation on the part of the agent.

To be aware of a moral requirement is, according to the realist, to have a conception of the situation as demanding a moral response.... The requirement will only be satisfied if the agent changes the world to fit it. But the realist also wishes to insist that the agent’s conception of the situation is purely cognitive. That is, the agent has a *belief* that he is morally required to act and so his state must have the direction of fit: this state must fit the world.<sup>29</sup>

The first direction of fit is that appropriate to desire, the second to belief, according to McNaughton, and a moral judgment entails both, though it is itself purely a belief.

A second kind of internalism maintains the relation of entailment but holds that the moral belief and moral motivation are not separate mental states or processes but are both part of moral judgment. A moral judgment on this view is essentially both a belief and a desire, or to use the term coined by J.E.J. Altham, it is a “besire” (*op. cit.*). We have already noted an objection that would apply to both versions of internalism, namely that the amoralist is not beyond possibility. Michael Stocker gives a number of everyday examples.<sup>30</sup> A common rebuttal, that in these cases no genuine moral judgment is made,<sup>31</sup> has not been convincing, even for all committed internalists. James Dreier, for example, would maintain that while these may be cases of

<sup>29</sup> McNaughton, *Moral Vision*, p. 109, emphasis in the original.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Stocker, “Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology,” this JOURNAL, LXXVI, 12 (December 1979): 738–53.

<sup>31</sup> R.M. Hare initiated this line of objection in *The Language of Morals* (New York: Oxford, 1952), pp. 124–26, 163–65.

moral judgment, the agents fail to be motivated because their conception of what they think is “morally required” is cognitively deficient. The agents in question are abnormal, not merely statistically but also normatively, in that they lack the proper cognitive moral development needed for moral belief to issue in moral desire. Thus, a third form of internalism “posits a necessary connection between believed good and motivation only in normal cases.”<sup>32</sup> Given that the examples of amoralists used to defeat internalism are abnormal (in both senses of the term), these putative counterexamples are disarmed and the thesis that moral belief necessitates desire in cases where the agent has sufficient cognitive wherewithal remains in tact.

Is there an objection that would defeat all three kinds of internalism? It is sometimes maintained that the necessary connection cannot hold in any cases because beliefs and desires have different “directions of fit”: beliefs should fit the world; the world should fit desires.<sup>33</sup> How can anything have both directions of fit at once? But this question is easily answered, since in the case of moral judgment the object of belief and the object of desire are distinct. A moral belief, for example that slavery is wrong, is about slavery being wrong, while the moral motivation that goes with the belief is about stopping slavery.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, it is not implausible to suppose that beliefs and desires can have the same object. Ruth Millikan maintains that many states of mind are like this.<sup>35</sup> Intending to go to the store involves both the motivation to go and the belief that you will go. If there is a general problem with realist internalism, we need to look elsewhere.

Transition cases, as I will call them, present a general problem that infects all three variations of internalism. In some of these cases a person changes moral belief while still in the grip of feelings and desires learned when developing the earlier belief. Imagine a person whose parents have raised him to regard gay sex as immoral because it

<sup>32</sup> “Internalism and Speaker Relativism,” p. 11. Note that on Dreier’s interpretation, (2\*) would be a conceptual truth. It would imply that if one is normal in his normative sense (has no cognitive defect in moral perception) and makes a moral judgment, the judgment is necessarily intrinsically motivating. I argue below that (2\*) is false when interpreted in this internalist way, but it does not follow that (2\*) is false when interpreted as merely a non-conceptual, statistical truth. So interpreted, (2\*) appears to be true and compatible with the theory of moral judgment that I advance to resolve the apparent inconsistency among (1), (2\*), and (3).

<sup>33</sup> The distinction is due to G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention*, 2nd edition (Ithaca: Cornell, 1963), p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> Little, “Virtue as Knowledge,” pp. 63–64.

<sup>35</sup> Ruth Garrett Millikan, “Pushmi-pullyu Representations,” in Larry May, Marilyn Friedman, and Andy Clark, eds., *Mind and Morals* (Cambridge: MIT, 1996), pp. 145–61.

is unnatural and also contrary to the teaching of the Bible. His belief and accompanying feelings of aversion and discomfort as well as the desire to eradicate this evil practice have been strongly reinforced by peers and teachers in his formative years. However, after he has traveled away from home and met people with very different moral and religious views, he begins to question his religious faith and the attitudes that go with it. He learns in biology class about the great variety of sexual response in nature and, after some serious reflection, forms for the first time the opinion that gay sex is not wrong. It would not be unusual if the feelings and desires appropriate to his former belief remain with him for a period of time, however brief. He finds himself believing that gay sex is okay but at the same time feels uncomfortable and embarrassed by it and feels a strong impulse to show his displeasure about it despite his new moral outlook. On discovering that his child is gay, his immediate response may be negative and have no flicker of a desire to accept the situation or act in accord with his belief. Here is a person in transition in his moral judgment in a situation where his feelings and desires lag behind his moral understanding, at least for a period of time.

A different kind of transition case would be a woman who has been treated unfairly but fails to perceive any injustice given how she has been encouraged to think about this type of situation. Perhaps she has been passed over for a job despite her being more qualified than the man to whom it is offered. She does, however, feel intensely angry when she thinks about what has happened. The problem is that she fails to see how she has been wronged in any way. She believes that it is appropriate that men should be offered work before equally qualified women, because of the different roles that men and women have in society. As in the previous example, we may imagine that her belief accords with her religious upbringing and both her belief and her earlier tendency to feel and want to act accordingly have been strongly reinforced. However, as her experience expands and she comes to have more invested in making decisions for herself and acting as an independent person, her moral belief about this situation can come to conflict with her emotional and motivational response. She continues to believe for a time that there is really nothing wrong even though she finds herself feeling and wanting to act as if she has been treated unjustly.

In the first kind of transition case moral belief changes without an immediate change in feeling and desire; in the latter kind, feeling and desire change without an immediate change in belief. Let us suppose further (though there is no necessity in this) that the moral response (feeling/desire or belief) that does not change initially

changes eventually (for reasons taken up in section v) and the transition from the old moral perspective to the new is complete. Moreover, let us grant to the moral realist for the sake of argument that in reality gay sex is not wrong as such and that in fact the woman was treated unjustly. Given these assumptions the cases can be described as someone's feelings, desires, and beliefs responding in an appropriate manner to moral reality, though responding not all at once but in a step-wise fashion. I claim that transition cases, so conceived, constitute damaging counterexamples to all three forms of realist internalism.

The force of the objection turns on two features of transition cases that are worth highlighting. The first is that while these cases are abnormal statistically (most people's moral responses are fairly stable), the cases are not abnormal in the normative sense that would disqualify them from being counterexamples to internalism. The second feature is that in the transition cases an aspect of the agent's moral judgment goes against what the agent has been taught to recognize as wrong. These features make the standard defenses against counterexamples irrelevant. The irrelevance in the first type of transition case is easy to see. The agent appears to form a moral belief without immediately having the appropriate emotional and motivational state. Since the belief goes against common thinking (we are supposing), the apparent moral belief cannot be discounted as meaning merely that this is what most people think. Since the case is one in which the agent shows sufficient cognitive appreciation of moral reality, despite his upbringing, the realist internalist cannot discount the case as being cognitively subnormal. But since the necessary connection between belief and motivation fails to hold for this case in which the agent sufficiently appreciates the nature of moral reality to form the right belief, the example runs counter to all three kinds of realist internalism.

The irrelevance of the standard defenses in the second type of transition case should also be clear, though the argument is slightly subtler. In this case the moral belief and the motivation of the agent are initially at odds, as before. Again the necessary connection appears to fail. But is this a case where the agent is cognitively deficient in the relevant way? The answer has to be no, because we are supposing that it is a moral fact that the agent is being treated unjustly and she has sufficient cognitive capacity to form an appropriate response, namely anger, despite the fact that this response goes against (we suppose) the thinking of most of her society. Moreover, because her response is counter to those others, she cannot be fairly described as simply mimicking the feelings prevalent in society. Indeed, in this

case a person appears to be making a moral judgment in virtue of making an appropriate cognitive response to moral facts despite the fact that she has not formed the corresponding moral belief. I will elaborate the implications of this aspect of this second transition case in sections III and v.

### III. MAKING SENSE OF MORAL JUDGMENT

Neurobiological considerations also tell against realist internalism,<sup>36</sup> but since the transition cases are reason enough to find an alternative, it is time to take stock. If these cases block the internalist rejection of (3) and the externalist reasons for rejecting (2\*) are blocked for the reasons given in section I, how can the moral realist avoid inconsistency? We appear to be left once more with the inconsistent triad: (1), (2\*), and (3). I believe that the answer lies in the interpretation of (1): the proposition that moral judgments are beliefs. In the literature (1) is taken to express “cognitivism” and the denial of (1) to express “noncognitivism,” as if these views were contradictories, leaving no logical room to reject both. But (1), as stated, is multiply ambiguous. The claim that moral judgments are beliefs could mean that they are only states of beliefs (hence not states of emotion and motivation), or it could mean that moral judgments are at least states of beliefs (and perhaps other states as well, either at once or on different occasions). Judging from the debate in the literature, one might be led to interpret (1) the first way and non-cognitivism as the view that moral judgments are only states of emotion or motivation, making the views contraries. But when (1) is read that way, it does not follow that both views cannot be false. In fact, if moral judgments normally were both states of belief and states of motivation, as I shall now urge, then both would be false. That is, both (1) read narrowly (moral judgments are only states of belief) and (2), the view that moral judgments are only states of motivation, would be false.

<sup>36</sup> Schroeder argues in *Three Faces of Desire*, pp. 157–61, that moral motivation based on representations of right and wrong is no different in its underlying neurobiological structure than other kinds of deliberative motivation. The content is different but not the process leading to action. Moral representations move us because of their projections on orbitofrontal cortex in the same way that representations of our favorite sandwiches move us. He considers the possibility that moral representations project movement possibilities “directly into the motor centers, and so cause action, independently of desires. Yet if moral representation would not merely promote possible actions, but actually override the inhibitory action of the basal ganglia, this would put moral motivation on a par with Touretteic urges and would make moral action a form of behavior tic” (p. 160).

Does that mean that moral realism must be rejected because it implies (1)? No, (1) can be read broadly so that it allows that moral judgments are normally both kinds of states at once. So understood, (1) would not contradict the conjunction of (2) and (3). Neither would it contradict that of (2\*) and (3), and the argument against moral realism (in either of the versions above) would be defeated. To avoid confusion, let us be explicit about the possible dual nature of moral judgments and substitute for (1):

(1\*) Normally, moral judgments are both states of belief and of motivation.

It is clear that (1\*), (2\*), and (3) form a consistent triad. If, therefore, moral realism requires (1\*), but does not require (1) read narrowly, then the threat of inconsistency vanishes.

At this point a second ambiguity emerges. (1), interpreted narrowly (or broadly), could mean that moral judgments are *always* (at least) moral beliefs. But (1) could also be read the way we normally read “Humans have two legs” and “Birds fly” to imply that mostly they do. This further ambiguity is important, since the second transition case suggests that moral judgments need not always be or include beliefs. In other words, moral judgments come in three varieties: some include only moral beliefs (first transition), some only emotional and motivational moral responses (second transition), and the vast majority (the paradigm on the dual view) include both. Note that (1\*) is compatible with this multifunctional view of moral judgment. It even allows moral knowledge in the second transition case, as I will argue in section v.

Are moral judgments genuinely dual in this way? Does moral realism require that they be so? There are two immediate reasons for affirmative answers to both questions. The most fundamental is that construing moral judgments in this way dissolves the threat of inconsistency contained in the original triad of propositions. Recall that we are assuming moral realism as the default position. If we accept the hybrid understanding of moral judgment, moral realism can maintain the tripartite position that moral judgments are belief states (though not exclusively or invariably), that moral judgments normally involve moral motivation that is not dependent on antecedent states of desire or feeling, and that the belief states that are contained in moral judgments are not motivating just in themselves, independently of antecedent states of desire and feeling. In other words, understanding moral judgments as having dual functions allows one to keep the original intuitions: that moral judgment can embody moral knowledge, that moral judgment normally

moves the judge intrinsically, and that belief alone cannot move anyone in this way. That this conception of moral judgment resolves this fundamental problem is a powerful argument in its favor, especially since this conception avoids the problems facing the standard alternatives.

In fact, the position also explains the evidence to which each alternative makes appeal. Its explanatory power is thus a second argument in its favor. An attraction of realist internalism is its implication that moral motivation and feeling normally issues (in part) directly from the moral judgment itself, independently of antecedent desires and feelings. The present proposal can explain this attraction because the proposal implies that moral judgment normally contains within it feelings and desires that directly move the person judging. The dual character of moral judgment allows it to be intrinsically motivating. On the other hand, the attraction of realist externalism is that it implies that the connection between moral belief and moral motivation, even in standard cases, is purely contingent, in accordance with our best psychological theory. The present proposal, as we have seen, has the same implication. In short, the proposal is able to enlist in its support the very considerations that have made the alternatives internalism and externalism attractive because it entails those considerations. Moral judgments because of their dual nature have all the different virtues that are attributed to them by the competing theories but lack the features that make these theories implausible.

#### IV. THREE ALTERNATIVE THEORIES

Is there an alternative theory that we have not considered? In particular, what about Smith's quasi-internalist view of moral judgment? Does this modified internalism have equal explanatory power? On his view, moral judgments are about whether one would be motivated to do certain things if one were rational (*op. cit.*). To judge that famine relief is morally required in present circumstances is to judge that a rational person would provide famine relief in these circumstances. Thus, if one is rational and this judgment is true, then necessarily one will provide famine relief. Here the necessary connection between moral belief and moral motivation is mediated by rationality. The proposal is ingenious in that it provides intrinsic motivation in the case of a rational person without directly violating the Humean dictum that beliefs by themselves are motivationally inert.

It is useful to compare this view with the dual theory of judgment, since it faces several problems that the latter theory does not share.

First, Smith's theory does not explain how false moral judgments motivate directly, though they should function the same way as true moral judgments according to any plausible account of how moral norms become internalized. If one has internalized a norm prescribing capital punishment the dual theory implies that normally one will be motivated intrinsically to promote the death penalty for certain crimes even if (contrary to one's belief) the norms involved cannot be justified and one's moral judgments about such matters are false. Smith's theory, on other hand, explains this kind of motivation only for cases where the judgment is made by a rational person and is true. A second problem is that Smith's account implies that if one is rational one will be motivated in virtue of one's rationality to act morally. At present there is no generally accepted account of rationality that has this implication. The leading contenders are generally accounts that construe rationality as efficiency in satisfying antecedent desires and therefore do not logically require a rational person to act morally. Here the dual theory offers a more plausible explanation of moral motivation. Third, Smith builds into the content of moral judgment a specific understanding of moral justification: a state of rational reflective equilibrium in judgments. But people can make the same moral judgment on the basis of a great variety of views about what justifies the norms that they invoke, including different religious beliefs about the moral authority of God. Whatever the merits of Smith's understanding of moral justification, a plausible account of moral motivation must not be held hostage to an implausible view about the content of moral judgment. The dual account of moral judgment, by contrast, leaves the nature of moral justification open.

Two other theories may appear to provide a genuine hybrid conception of moral judgment. Michael Ridge proposes a theory called "ecumenical expressivism" in which "moral utterances express both desires and beliefs."<sup>37</sup> This view is expressivist rather than cognitivist, since it "gives logical priority to desire" (*ibid.*, p. 309). It does so because it takes moral predicates to express "both a speaker's attitude in favor of action in general insofar as they have a certain property (whatever property guides the speaker's approval of actions quite generally) and a belief which makes anaphoric reference to that property" (*ibid.*, p. 313). For example, a speaker may have a utilitarian

<sup>37</sup> Ridge, "Ecumenical Expressivism: Finessing Frege," *Ethics*, cxvi (2006): 302–36 at 302.

attitude that favors action just as long as it maximizes happiness. In judging an action that has this property to be morally appropriate, the speaker is expressing her approval of it and her belief that it has the property that elicits her approval. Her moral judgment is thus contains elements of both belief and motivation. Ridge takes this view to escape the false dichotomy between the thesis that moral utterances express beliefs but not desires and the thesis that they instead express desires but not beliefs (*ibid.*, p. 305).

But does it? Moral belief on this theory is not inherently normative. That a speaker believes that an action has a property that in general elicits her approval of the action and her desire to perform it, such as the property of maximizing happiness, is not a belief that is inherently normative according to this theory. The way that Ridge puts the point is that the truth conditions of moral utterances are not necessarily provided by the beliefs that they express, no more than the utterance, "This action is morally appropriate," is necessarily true if it is believed to maximize happiness. Given Ridge's expressivism, whether the property of maximizing happiness makes an utterance true is a first-order moral issue. However, on the hybrid view that I am defending, the moral belief that is normally part of a moral judgment is inherently normative. Thus, in the first transition case the moral belief state obtains in the absence of the emotional and motivational state that normally goes with the moral belief, but the believer is, nevertheless, making a moral judgment. Such a case is not possible in ecumenical expressivism. Belief alone, on this theory, has no moral status. In short, the fundamental dichotomy between cognitivism and expressivism is preserved, however ecumenical the intention behind the theory.

Ridge notes that one could advocate a view, ecumenical cognitivism, in which moral belief rather than desire has priority and cites David Copp as having the most developed version of it. Like Ridge, Copp focuses on moral utterances and what they express.<sup>38</sup> In Copp's view (which he calls "realist-expressivism"), a moral utterance expresses a moral belief and also "certain characteristic conative attitudes or motivational states" in virtue of semantic conventions. His theory is not internalist, however, because a person expressing a moral judgment need not have the attitudes in question or be motivated in the way indicated by those conventions. Put in my terms,

<sup>38</sup> Copp, "Realist-Expressivism: A Neglected Option for Moral Realism," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, XVIII (2001): 1–43.

there is no problem with the first transition case. The moral belief expressed in the moral utterances can stand alone as an inherently normative moral judgment, in contrast to what is implied in ecumenical expressivism. But this view as well is not genuinely hybrid; nor does Copp intend it to be. Moral judgments expressed in moral utterances are essentially moral beliefs. The attitudes and motivation that are expressed, though they are part of the judgment expressed when a moral belief is also expressed, do not constitute an aspect of moral judgment that could in the absence of moral belief be itself a moral judgment as in the second transition case. The priority in the understanding of moral judgment is for Copp the belief state, not the state of attitude and desire. In this way, Copp's theory too reinforces the traditional dichotomy, but in the opposite direction. Neither his theory nor Ridge's is a fully hybrid theory in which both elements have equal status.

#### V. THE COGNITIVE ROLE OF EMOTION IN MORAL CHANGE

In a fully hybrid theory both parts of moral judgment, the belief and the state of emotion and motivation, have equal status, to the extent that each can function by itself as a moral judgment in the absence of the other. The latter aspect allows the existence of transition cases that distinguish quasi-hybrids from the robust hybrid theory in which these parts of moral judgment are normally together but can sometimes stand alone. The idea of moral belief being able by itself to constitute a moral judgment is not unfamiliar; we find it in externalist cognitivism. Nor is the idea of a state of emotion and motivation being able by itself to constitute a moral judgment; it is the essence of expressivism. But the idea of the latter state by itself constituting a moral judgment in the context of moral realism is not common. How is it possible to treat such a state as being by itself a moral judgment without lapsing into expressivism?

In this section, I want to address the question by considering the role of emotion in moral judgment and then link this role with the content of moral belief. I hope to show how the relation between moral emotion and the content of moral belief can explain why the parts of moral judgment normally function together to form a unified whole. Thus far I have lumped together the elements of desire and emotion and speak of the theory of moral judgment as a dual or hybrid theory as if there are just two basic aspects. The situation is of course more complex than this picture would suggest. In particular, the role of moral emotion in moral judgment is different from that of desire. Emotion, while normally a part of moral motivation, has a representational role in motivation that serves

to make beliefs more accurate and consequently allows emotion and belief, as guides to motivation, to function in a unified way in moral thought.<sup>39</sup>

That emotion has an important part to play in moral thought is well recognized. It functions, for example, to communicate moral attitudes through facial expression and body language more quickly and at times more accurately than verbal expression.<sup>40</sup> Since morals depend for their effectiveness in coordinating behavior on people knowing how each other responds to moral issues, moral emotion has an important supplementary role to play in moral communication.<sup>41</sup> Emotion also stabilizes moral judgments because it tends to be spontaneous and to a marked degree insensitive in the short term to changes in information.<sup>42</sup> As in the second transition case, resentment can be unplanned and arise even in a person who believes that she has not been wronged. Because of this feature moral attitudes rooted in emotion are not easily manipulated and are able to remain stable even when they run contrary to immediate self-interest. At third important feature of moral emotion is its tendency to elicit similar feelings in others, even those who resist it, when the feelings are known to be already widely shared. This feature complements the previous, though it may appear to work against it when considered in abstraction from social context. Moral attitudes need to be stable but not too stable, or else social moral change is not possible.<sup>43</sup> Again we have a feature of moral emotion that helps to promote coordinated responses to moral norms and stability in the process of moral change. As important as these features are, however, they fit equally well the views of internalist and externalist moral realism, since neither denies that moral judgment involves in some way moral motivation and both can allow emotion to play a role in moral motiva-

<sup>39</sup> I am indebted to Meredith Schwartz for suggesting that the representational character of emotion allows moral emotion to play a unifying role in moral judgment, given my dual conception of it. She develops her view in "Feeling Good: The Role of Emotion in Naturalized Epistemology," presented on July 22, 2005, at Dalhousie University.

<sup>40</sup> On the ability of facial expression to convey emotion, see Paul Ekman, *Unmasking the Face: A Guide to Recognizing Emotions from Facial Expressions* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1975).

<sup>41</sup> Gibbard explores how emotion coordinates moral behavior in *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1990).

<sup>42</sup> See Paul E. Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are* (Chicago: University Press, 1997), pp. 91–98. An application to the problem of stabilizing moral attitudes is given in R.H. Frank, *Passions within Reason: The Strategic Role of the Emotions* (New York: Norton, 1988).

<sup>43</sup> Campbell and Woodrow, "Why Moore's Open Question Is Open," p. 357.

tion. Indeed, the functions noted are also central to the story that noncognitivists tell about morals.

How then does emotion make a difference? The difference resides in the fact that emotion has a representational function like that of belief.<sup>44</sup> Consider fear, an emotion that is not specifically moral. It is commonplace that belief and fear can share the same propositional object. For example, I can both believe and fear that there is danger present. It is also commonplace that both may fail to represent correctly. However, in the latter case the belief, not the fear, is literally false. Why is this? I suspect that we do not readily speak of fear as true or false because the primary function of motivational states is not to represent things as they are. Whatever the reason, the similarity of fear to belief with respect to representation is striking. Besides representing as fearful the same thing, fear like belief can be evaluated as being baseless or irrational depending on whether what is feared is true and whether the truth of what is feared can account for the fear. If I fear that a spider will harm me but it cannot and I know it, my fear is unwarranted. In another case I may feel fear because there is danger present and I have unconsciously responded to cues that give me good reason to be afraid, but for ideological reasons I do not believe that there is danger present. I think of myself as being irrational and having groundless fear when in fact my fear is well grounded and, given the cues, rational. Although the fear is not literally true, it can be evaluated in ways that are analogous to the way we assess the corresponding belief. In particular, we can evaluate fear as being warranted or rational depending on whether what is feared is true and whether there is sufficient evidence for what is feared.

Fear is not an exception in this respect. Consider moral emotions like those that we discussed in the transition cases. In one of these cases a person feels resentment for being passed over for promotion even though she believes that she has been treated fairly and not in any way wronged. Is her emotion irrational and baseless? It may appear so given her belief that the process was legitimate and fair. Yet it remains possible that she is mistaken about the latter and that her emotion is occasioned by events that indicate that she is mistaken

<sup>44</sup>In my *Illusions of Paradox*, pp. 70–74, 173, I advance this view of emotion to support a form of moral realism in which moral knowledge can take the form of well-grounded moral emotion. That view is compatible with the position taken here, but my focus now is on the relation of moral emotion to moral belief. A like-minded conception of emotions is presented in Cheshire Calhoun, “Cognitive Emotions?,” in Calhoun and Robert C. Solomon, eds., *What Is an Emotion?* (New York: Oxford, 1984), pp. 327–42.

(although she has ignored them or not given them appropriate weight). If the feeling of resentment persists, she may reflect on why she would feel this way and discuss her feeling with persons she trusts. The outcome could go either way: she may come to understand why she feels resentment and find that these reasons do not justify this reaction, or she may come to believe that despite her first impression there are good grounds for her feeling.

The first point to notice is that the logical tension between the belief and the emotion is possible because the emotion has the power to represent something that (from a realist perspective) can be true or false. The second point is that emotion, because of its representational power, is able to play a vital role in moral judgments changing to reflect moral reality more accurately. Take the case of feeling disapproval or even revulsion regarding sexual behavior now believed to be entirely acceptable. The emotion and the belief are in conflict because the moral disgust has the power to represent gay sex as morally repugnant. If the belief that it is not has a more rational basis, the unified moral judgment that results can more accurately reflect moral reality than the disgust. In the second transition case, because the emotion of resentment has a more rational basis than the belief that the treatment has been fair, the change is again to a unified moral judgment that more accurately reflects moral reality. The representational character of the emotion allows a conflict between moral belief and moral emotion to initiate moral change and either to make the ensuing unified moral judgment more accurate and more rational.

What are described in both kinds of change are types of moral transition that are not unusual and that afford a central role for emotion in moral change. Another argument for the hybrid conception of moral judgment, then, is that it best explains role of emotion in the transition cases. Moral motivation, including moral emotion, has equal status with moral belief on the dual conception. Both are equally important in understanding rational change in moral judgment. This equality in status is exactly what is manifest in the examples of moral transition given the role of emotion just described. The second transition case, however, is especially significant. Where the emotion is rational (that is, well founded) it can lead the way toward a more rational moral belief. Externalist realism has severe problems already noted, but in addition, because it gives less than equal status to moral motivation, it cannot explain how emotion can play the role of transforming moral belief. On the other hand, internalist realism cannot explain this role either, since it allows a split between motivation and belief only where the agent has

inappropriate motivation. The case of rationally based resentment is just the opposite.

Another way that the dual conception best explains the role of emotion in these cases is that it implies that moral judgment includes elements that form dynamic unity despite being functionally distinct. By dynamic unity I mean that, while the elements can pull apart, as in the transition cases, and thus at times lack unity, the structure of moral judgment is such that elements will normally work together. Given the role of emotion just described for these cases, we see that there is a natural tendency for the disunity to be resolved in favor of either the motivation or the belief. Realist internalism may appear at first glance to offer something comparable, since it holds that moral belief explains the motivation that it normally necessitates. But the connection is far from dynamic, since the moral motivation is supposed to be entirely determined by the moral belief with no room for the influence to go the other way or for moral motivation to be rational when it is opposed to moral belief.

To summarize, transition cases are about change in moral judgment. In contrast with the dual conception of moral judgment, both internalism and externalism overintellectualize moral change, though in different ways. For externalism change in moral judgment is occasioned first by change in moral belief. Because of her antecedent desires and feelings, an agent's moral motivation changes for instrumental reasons to accord with her change in moral belief.<sup>45</sup> Moral motivation follows moral belief around like a puppy following its master, mostly sticking close but sometimes getting lost. For internalism the picture is different but only superficially. How one is motivated morally depends on what one believes, but the connection is necessary for agents who have sufficient cognitive capability. The puppy never gets lost with a wise master. In neither theory does moral emotion in conjunction with moral motivation transform moral belief, contrary to much everyday experience of change in moral judgment.

<sup>45</sup> An exception is Copp's externalist realism in "Realist-Expressionism." In this theory an agent's motivation need not be purely instrumental because her motivation is integral to the expression of her moral belief (without being entailed by it). Still, in this theory emotion has no representational role to play in the creation of moral knowledge. The theory cannot, therefore, properly explain moral change in which motivation and moral belief diverge because the emotion contained in moral motivation is in better touch with moral reality than moral belief. For this reason it cannot explain the failure of those forms of realist internalism that do not require moral belief to entail moral motivation.

So far I have said nothing about the content of moral belief, other than that it is able to express moral truth, and the arguments above do not depend on any specific view about moral content. However, to better appreciate the unity among the different parts of moral judgment, consider what I take to be a reasonable hypothesis, namely, that moral beliefs imply that the states of emotion and motivation that would normally (but for the reasons given, not always) accompany them are justified in virtue of perceived features of the thing judged. In other words, in the normal cases, what is believed when someone makes a moral judgment is that the same general type of emotion and motivation that would normally form a part of the judgment as a whole is in fact justified by perceived features of what is judged. Consider Gilbert Harman's example of hoodlums setting a cat on fire for fun.<sup>46</sup> If one suddenly comes on this scene and perceives the kids causing the cat extreme pain just for fun, one is apt to experience revulsion and anger, perhaps tinged with fear, together with an intense desire to stop the torture. One also is apt to have the conviction, though it may not be consciously formulated, that this type of reaction just described is entirely justified by the fact that one is seeing a cat tortured for fun. I want to suggest that this combination of ingredients constitutes a central case of moral judgment in which the belief involved is linked in content to the felt emotional and motivational response. A full account would need to include an explanation of what makes someone's emotion and motivation generically moral, and more importantly, when features of what is judged justify a certain kind of emotional and motivational response. I will not attempt to develop such an account here,<sup>47</sup> and the hybrid theory I defend does not depend on it. Still, such an account would provide a yet deeper unity among the parts of moral judgment.

#### VI. A SEMANTIC OBJECTION

It may be objected that I have argued only for a unified theory of moral judgment understood as a psychological state and the arguments thus far do nothing to demonstrate that moral judgment understood in linguistic and semantic terms is similarly unified. It may be objected further that the standard understanding of moral realism is semantic and that, unless the dual view of moral judgment can be extended to moral judgment taken as a moral claim expressed

<sup>46</sup> Harman, "Ethics and Observation," in Sayre-McCord, ed., *Essays on Moral Realism*, pp. 119–24, at p. 120.

<sup>47</sup> An account of this kind is sketched in Campbell and Woodrow, "Why Moore's Open Question Is Open."

in language, no solution has been given to the inconsistent triad set out in semantic terms. Finally, it may be noted that the apparently contradictory positions of cognitivism and noncognitivism are nowadays usually formulated just semantically.<sup>48</sup>

To remove ambiguity let us use the term *moral judgment-E* to refer to the linguistic expression of a moral judgment (when it is used precisely to express a moral judgment)<sup>49</sup> and *moral judgment-M* to refer to the mental state of forming a moral judgment. Then the corresponding inconsistent triad framed in semantic terms would be:

- (1#) Moral judgments-*E* express states of belief.
- (2#) Moral judgments-*E* always (or normally) express states of mind that move the judger intrinsically, independent of antecedent desires and feelings.
- (3#) States of belief never move the judger intrinsically, independent of antecedent desires and feelings.

As before, I will assume that states of belief and their expressions are either true or false in order for (1#) to represent moral cognitivism. Since moral realism, put in semantic terms, entails (1#) and thus is inconsistent with (2#) and (3#) and since the latter are plausible for much the same reasons as apply to (1) and (2), the new inconsistent triad constitutes an argument against moral realism.

How different is this triad? It is easy to show that the old inconsistency among (1), (2), and (3) comes to the same thing if a moral judgment-*M* is nothing more or less than what is (or would be expressed) expressed by a moral judgment-*E*. (I propose, as noted, to understand these terms so that what counts as a moral judgment-*E* depends in part on context.) Assume that (1) is true, that all moral-judgments-*M* are beliefs. Then every moral judgment-*E* expresses a state of belief. Going the other way, assume that (1#) is true, that every moral judgment-*E* expresses a state of belief. It follows that every moral judgment-*M* is a belief. Assuming this equivalence between (1) and (1#), we see that (1#) contradicts the conjunction of (2) and (3) if the latter contradicts (1) and that (1) contradicts the conjunction of (2#) and (3#) if the latter contradicts (1#). In short, the difference

<sup>48</sup> Fifty years ago, theorists took noncognitivism to be a theory of morals that is both semantic and epistemic. See Richard B. Brandt's definition in *Ethical Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959), p. 205. Sayre-McCord provides a typical contemporary semantic formulation of cognitivism and noncognitivism in his "The Many Moral Realisms."

<sup>49</sup> 'Moral judgments-*E*', as I use the term, refers to moral assertions or claims, though the same words in another context might express doubt or disbelief.

in idioms is superficial, which may explain why discussions of moral realism move freely between the psychological and the semantic.

A true resolution of the problem, therefore, should fit both versions of the triad. The resolution applied to the second case is to note the ambiguity in (1#). On a narrow reading it implies that moral judgments-*E* express only beliefs, while on a broad reading it implies that they express at least states of belief and perhaps other states as well. In line with the resolution given earlier, genuine inconsistency obtains only with the narrow reading, and with this reading there is the anomaly that cognitivism, which is supposed to be represented in (1#), is only the contrary of noncognitivism, when the latter is put semantically as the view that moral judgments-*E* express moral attitudes and sentiment but not (true or false) beliefs. To get (1#) and its denial to match up exactly with cognitivism and noncognitivism, we need the broad reading of (1#) and then the inconsistency vanishes. Of course, there is a still broader reading of (1#), corresponding to (1\*), namely that moral judgments-*E* normally express at least states of belief, to allow for the second kind of transition case, and again there is no inconsistent triad.

But can there be a dual theory of moral judgments-*E*? That would require a dual theory of semantic content and would that be at all plausible? Rockney Jacobsen argues effectively against semantic cognitivism and for expressive pluralism (to use his terms). Only the former presents a problem for a dual theory of moral judgment-*E*. Semantic cognitivism, in his words, says that “any utterance of a truth-assessable sentence which means that *p* is an expression of a belief that *p*.”<sup>50</sup> This thesis has the unfortunate implication that when I say “I will arrive early” I must be expressing a belief rather than say a promise or a resolution or even an exclamation of surprise on discovering that I will arrive early. Jacobsen writes:

*What* I promise, predict, or resolve is, in each case, that I will arrive early, and that would not be so unless the different illocutionary utterances had, in each case, the same meaning. Indeed, it is only because meaning is autonomous from force that we can grasp the meaning of an utterance without knowing its force: the query: “Was that a promise, or a prediction?” betrays no lack of *semantic* knowledge (*ibid.*, pp. 133–34).

Truth value, he concludes, is independent of illocutionary force. His second premise is “that the type of mental state expressed by an utterance is tied to, and varies with, its illocutionary force” (*ibid.*,

<sup>50</sup> Jacobson, “Semantic Character and Expressive Content,” *Philosophical Papers*, xxvi (1997): 129–46, at p. 129.

p. 134). This premise is eminently plausible, assuming that the mental state need not always vary. It follows that expressive content, that is, what mental state is expressed by an utterance, can vary without any change in meaning or truth aptness.<sup>51</sup> For example, whether an utterance expresses surprise or a promise or a resolution or belief is not dependent on whether it is true or false. Thus, Jacobsen concludes, semantic cognitivism is false.

This argument appears to me to be sound. Its conclusion bears directly on the present discussion, as Jacobsen is aware, since moral cognitivists have held that moral claims must be expressions of belief rather than attitude or desire, given that they are true or false, while moral expressivists have held that moral claims are expressions of attitude or desire and hence not true or false.<sup>52</sup> Hence, both positions assume that any utterance of a truth-assessable sentence which means that *p* is an expression of a belief that *p* rather than attitude or desire. That is, they assume semantic cognitivism, which is an untenable doctrine for the reasons just given. Of course, Jacobsen's argument does not lead directly to the hybrid theory that I am advocating, but in an important footnote he allows it:

Another matter I cannot explore here: my argument shows only that we are permitted, and often required, to count truth-apt judgments as expressions of feeling or desire; nothing in the argument shows that moral judgments do not *also* express beliefs. It thus remains possible that my moral judgment expresses *both* a feeling of disapproval *and* my belief that what you are doing is wrong (*op. cit.*, p. 145).

I believe that he is exactly right. The point of immediate relevance, however, is that his argument clearly defeats the objection that dual semantic roles are impossible, since that objection is based on semantic cognitivism. There exists no in principle objection to utterances functioning both to express belief and to express a different illocutionary force, such as commitment to behave in accord with moral norms, or to express emotions guided by those norms.

#### VII. WHAT IS MORAL JUDGMENT?

Moral judgment, whether judgment is taken psychologically or linguistically, is normally multifaceted involving intrinsic motivation, belief, and emotion. A judgment that an action is morally wrong, for

<sup>51</sup> Copp works out this view in detail for the case of sentences expressing moral claims in his "Realist-Expressivism."

<sup>52</sup> The ecumenical versions of cognitivism and expressivism do not have this implication, but they offer no basis for the objection against the hybrid theory considered here.

example, is normally (1) motivation of non-negligible force (or the expression of it) to treat the act as wrong just in virtue of certain perceived features, (2) belief (or expression of it) that the act is wrong, and (3) emotion (or the expression of it) that reinforces the motivation and the belief through its cognitive role in unifying these elements.

The qualification 'normally' indicates that these elements are not always found together. In the transition cases the elements can pull apart at least temporarily; then there is not one unified judgment but two different moral judgments each of which exemplify only some of the elements. Each is nevertheless a moral judgment. The theory describes the normal case and situates it in the context of stable moral norms. Change in moral judgment does occur, however, and the theory explains how change in moral motivation and moral belief is possible and the cognitive role that emotion plays in it. Another virtue of the theory is that it explains this possibility in a manner that resolves a central paradox regarding moral belief, feeling, and motivation and avoids the mistakes of the alternative realist theories of moral judgment.

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