

## Response to Dan López de Sa

1. What Mackie finds queer about objective values is the idea of objective to-be-pursuedness. That wording of Mackie's, which López de Sa quotes, plainly sounds a gerundive note. That which is to-be-pursued is that which *should* be pursued. This use of "should" introduces the idea of rationality. The internal connection with motivation that Mackie finds unintelligible, in anything that might be part of the fabric of reality, is an internal connection with *rational* motivation, motivation rationally grounded on an instance of objective to-be-pursuedness.

I agree that the connection Mackie jibs at is not just the thought that objective values *should* elicit desires, but also the thought that they *would* elicit desires under certain conditions. But the conditions under which there would be these desires, according to the way of thinking Mackie attacks, would include a capacity, on the part of the subjects in question, to recognize instances of the objective to-be-pursuedness that would provide reasons for the desires. Values would elicit desires in those subjects on the basis of their recognition that desires are rationally called for by the values they recognize.

Mackie's target is not the idea that confrontation with what is in fact an instance of a value would generate a suitable motivation in just anyone. That would certainly be a queer thesis, to put it mildly. But the queerness of that thesis is not the supposed queerness Mackie is concerned with. Mackie's target is the idea that confrontation with an instance of a value would generate a suitable motivation (aside from weakness of will and the like) in anyone who recognized that she was confronting an instance of the value in question. Mackie thinks the implied idea of something that is there to be recognized involves an unacceptable ontological inflation.

López de Sa gives this formulation of the motivational internalism that is part of the view Mackie attacks (he labels it "(I)"):

It is necessary and *a priori* that: If something is good, then we would desire it (under appropriate reflective conditions, weakness of will and the like aside).

How is "we" meant here? What I have been urging could be put by saying that one does not give a counterexample to the thesis, in the sense in which something on these lines is part of Mackie's target, if one imagines a

possible world in which we (you and I, say) lack whatever capacities a defender of objective values thinks are needed for someone to be able to recognize instances of goodness. To defend the claim that values are objectively there in the world against Mackie's argument from queerness, one has no need to defend the crazy idea that even if someone is blind to values, the presence of instances of value in her vicinity will still make a difference to her desires.

I think this undermines López de Sa's ingenious argument, in his §III, that a rigid response-dependence view about values cannot offer a reply to Mackie's argument.

The rigidification to us as we are, in the rigid response-dependence thesis about values (López de Sa's "dispositionalism"), needs to be understood with "as we are" including our possession of whatever capacities are needed for us to be capable of rational responsiveness to instances of value. In a possible world that contains us not necessarily as we are, we may not be disposed to value the things that are in fact valuable, since we may lack the capacity to recognize that they are valuable. (It does not make any difference to insist on appropriate reflective conditions. If in some possible world we are incapable of recognizing instances of value, no amount of reflection will bring our motivations in line with the way values are distributed in that world.) So, as López de Sa argues, the rigid response-dependence thesis entails that its flexible counterpart is at best contingently true. But I have no need to dispute that. It is no problem for thesis (I), understood as it needs to be understood if it is to capture the role of motivational internalism in Mackie's argument. Thesis (I) needs to be understood with a matching rigidification at the point where it mentions us. A possible world in which we are incapable of recognizing instances of value is no more a counterexample to thesis (I), so understood, than it is a counterexample to the rigid response-dependence thesis.

2. A rigid response-dependence thesis about values would be unacceptable if it did not accommodate the fact that our conception of what values there are and how they are distributed in the world is a work in progress. The thesis should not imply that we, as we are, already have everything straight in our value thinking.

This is connected with a disanalogy that I insisted on when I proposed the analogy between values and colours. In the case of colours the relevant linkage with responses, which I invoked in order to capture the sense in which concepts of phenomenal colours are subjective, is set up by explaining colours in terms of dispositions to bring about those responses. But with values the linkage is with responses that are not merely elicited but merited.

This is another way of coming at the point I urged in §1 above. If we explain values in terms of dispositions to elicit responses, we must not be thinking of responses that are brought about just anyhow by confrontation

with valuable things. The eliciting of responses must be conceived as mediated by rationality. And once we are clear about that, we can see that the presence in reality of values, conceived as essentially response-dependent in that rationality-mediated way, is not threatened by possible worlds in which we lack the rational responsiveness to values that we in fact have. To suppose the reality of values is threatened by its being only contingent that we are rationally responsive to values would be like supposing that the reality of colours, explained by saying such things as that to be red is to be such as to look red to us in certain conditions of illumination, is threatened by its being only contingent that our vision is sensitive to differences in the wavelength of light.

3. I do not want to defend the flexible version of a response-dependence thesis about values, the topic of López de Sa's §IV. The rigid version is immune to his argument, so there is no need to resort to the flexible version.

But I do want to question a feature of the way he treats the flexible version.

He suggests that to acknowledge that there are essentially contestable claims in some area is to accept relativism about judgements in that area. I think this could be correct only on a pointlessly thin interpretation of relativism. As I understand it, relativism about a range of judgements abandons the idea that any of those judgements are susceptible of truth *simpliciter* (as opposed to "truth for so-and-so").

There are two things one might be saying if one says there are essentially contestable claims in, say, ethics. On neither of them does the acceptance of essential contestability imply abandoning truth-aptness for some claims in the area.

One thing one might be saying is that there can be disputes in, say, ethics in which one person denies what another person says and both are blameless. This does not imply that no ethical claims are true. Perhaps there is truth even on the question under dispute in such a case, but it is beyond the reach of the investigative powers of the parties. If one insists, against this, on a construal of "blameless" according to which if there were truth on a question it would be discovered by a blameless inquirer, then a case of irresolvable failure to reach agreement between blameless parties is one in which a sentence that the parties can formulate is not susceptible of truth or falsity. But why should that seem to show that the same goes for ethical sentences in general?

Another gloss on the thesis of essential contestability is that being right about something does not carry with it a guarantee that one will be able to persuade just anyone of one's conviction. Sometimes continuing to insist that one has the right answer may require one to suppose that those who resist persuasion are not blameless. But that does not seem right always. Someone may not be to blame, in any good sense, for her inability to recognize the cogency of an argument that is nevertheless genuinely cogent. That yields another con-

strual of the idea of irresolvable disputes in which both parties are blameless. Truth is not out of one's reach, even though someone else may blamelessly refuse to accept one's judgement. So this version of the second gloss coalesces with a version of the first. In any case, if we take the thesis of essential contestability this way, what we are making of it is an acknowledgement that being in command of the truth does not by itself ensure an end to dispute. That is clearly not a relativistic abandonment of truth-aptness.

As López de Sa says, the objectivity I defend for evaluative claims consists in their being truth-apt, in some cases true, and in some cases knowably so. He suggests that in putting this construal on objectivity I am settling for a putative realism about the ethical that would be consistent with relativism. But this suggestion depends on that pointlessly thin interpretation of relativism. The truth I defend is *truth*, not the so-called "truth" expressed by talk of what is true for us, supposedly consistently with its not being true for someone else. I am not sure what more López de Sa thinks one should want, in a defence of the idea that ethical statements stand a chance of capturing how things stand in reality.

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