**The Phenomenal Appreciation of Reasons**

C2

**(Or: How Not to Be a Psychopath)**

**Abstract**

Huckleberry Finn believes that by helping Miss Watson’s slave Jim escape to freedom, he is doing something wrong. But Huck does it anyway—and many want to give him moral credit for this choice. If Huck is to be worthy of such moral esteem, however, it seems there must be some implicit way of appreciating and responding to considerations as moral reasons that does not involve explicitly believing that those considerations are moral reasons. This chapter argues that an agent like Huck can implicitly appreciate a consideration as a moral reason to φ by presenting it under the light of a particular phenomenologically-mediated mode of presentation: one that presents that consideration via the light of a felt directive force “pointing” towards φ-ing—lending weight to it, or soliciting it—in a particular authoritative way. Thus, I suggest, Huck may be understood on analogy with a young jazz piano virtuoso. As she may appreciate that the G-seventh chord having been played just so constitutes an aesthetic reason for her to ease into the C-major-seventh chord just so by virtue of experiencing the former as pointing or directing her to the latter, so also, I propose, Huck may appreciate the considerations speaking in favor of helping Jim as moral reasons to help Jim by virtue of experiencing them as pointing or directing him to help Jim. The chapter also examines and rejects four alternative proposals for how to account for implicit reasons-appreciation: first, a de re account of appreciation and then three additional accounts of appreciation derived from major theories of mental representation (inferentialist, causal tracking, and functionalist theories).

Keywords

moral agency, marginal agency, moral phenomenology, phenomenology, cognitive phenomenology, unreflective action, skilled agency, Huckleberry Finn

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**2.1. Introduction**

C2.S1

Stealing is wrong.[[1]](#footnote-1) Huck knows it’s wrong, and he believes that by helping Miss Watson’s slave Jim escape to freedom, he is stealing—and so doing something wrong. But Huck does it anyway. Going against what he explicitly believes he has decisive moral reason to do, he decides to help Jim escape to the North.[[2]](#footnote-2)

C2.P1

Why do we credit Huck for his deed when it constitutes a failure to respond to the moral reasons he explicitly believes he has? Huck’s choice to help Jim corresponds with what he has objective moral reason to do, but our esteem for Huck isn’t warranted if his choice only happens to accord with the moral reasons that apply to him, and isn’t also—at least in some capacity—made for the sake of those reasons.[[3]](#footnote-3) To earn our esteem, thus, Huck must appreciate and respond to considerations speaking in favor of helping Jim as moral reasons. But then, if Huck is worthy of our esteem, there must be some implicit way of appreciating and responding to considerations as moral reasons that does not involve explicitly believing that those considerations are moral reasons.

C2.P2

In this chapter I argue that an agent like Huck can implicitly appreciate a consideration as a moral reason to φ without explicitly believing it to be a moral reason by presenting it under the light of a particular phenomenologically-mediated mode of presentation: one that presents the relevant consideration via the light of a felt directive force “pointing” towards φ-ing—lending weight to it, or soliciting it—in a particular way. Thus, I suggest, Huck may be understood on analogy with a young jazz piano virtuoso. She may appreciate that the G-seventh chord having been played just so constitutes an aesthetic reason for her to ease into the C-major-seventh chord just so—despite lacking explicit beliefs about what she has aesthetic reason to do—by virtue of experiencing the former as pointing or directing her to the latter. Like her, I propose, Huck may appreciate the considerations speaking in favor of helping Jim as moral reasons to help Jim—despite lacking explicit beliefs about what he has moral reason to do—by virtue of experiencing them as pointing or directing him to help Jim.

C2.P3

My argument proceeds as follows. In the first two sections of the chapter I consider four major approaches to explaining implicit moral reasons-appreciation and outline difficulties faced by each. In the third section, I propose my own—more intuitively plausible, I argue—account of implicit moral reasons-appreciation. In the fourth section, I suggest that my account of implicit moral reasons-appreciation may also provide insight into the nature of ordinary moral reasons-appreciation. In general, I treat moral reasons-appreciation as that kind of (non-factive) representation of considerations as moral reasons that is—at least in non-derivative cases—relevant to moral agency and evaluations thereof.[[4]](#footnote-4) My main aim is not to give a definitive, differentiating description of the phenomenology relevant to such appreciation, but rather to show that there is a critical phenomenal component to it that bears greater investigation than it has so far received.[[5]](#footnote-5)

C2.P4

**2.2. De Re Accounts of Implicit Appreciation**

C2.S2

One natural way to try to accommodate cases of implicit appreciation of moral reasons like Huck’s is to lower the cognitive bar on moral reasons-appreciation: to do away with representation of moral reasons altogether and allow mere de re contact with moral reasons to underwrite appreciation. Arpaly (2002), for instance, claims that an agent is creditably responsive to moral reasons if (roughly) she responds to the genuinely moral reason-giving features of the world out of an intrinsic de re desire that the course of action that has those features be taken.[[6]](#footnote-6) Along similar lines, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) claim that exemplar moral agents comport themselves with the moral reason-giving features of their circumstances in a direct and spontaneous way, without the baggage of intermediary de dicto representations of those features as reason-giving. Drawing on these discussions, we might propose:

C2.P5

(1) DE RE: An agent implicitly appreciates a consideration c as a moral reason r to φ iff c is a moral reason to φ and her intrinsic concern about c leads her to desire that φ-ing be done.

C2.P6

Unfortunately, this proposal won’t work: for DE RE can’t distinguish the perspective of an implicit moral agent on her reasons from that of, say, a lucky psychopath. Consider Juliet and her psychopathic cousin Silas:

C2.P7

Juliet: Juliet’s family is caught in a bitter rivalry with another family, characterized by repeated cycles of violent revenge that are prodded by the premium that her society puts on machismo and social status. Juliet sees her cousin Tybalt punch Benvolio, a member of the other family on her family’s “turf,” right in the eye. She sees that Benvolio is badly injured and realizes he’s in great pain. Uneasy and disturbed about Benvolio’s being in pain, she tries to coax Tybalt to stop. “Why? What’s wrong with you?” Tybalt asks, “Don’t you care about our family’s honor?” Juliet is not sure what to say. “No, I care,” she sighs, “I guess I’m just a softie who can’t bear seeing people in pain.”

C2.P8

We can imagine that Juliet implicitly appreciates Benvolio’s pain as a moral reason for Tybalt to stop, even though she lacks the conceptual resources to explicitly characterize that consideration as a moral reason. Now consider, in contrast, her psychopathic cousin Silas:

C2.P9

Silas (De Re): Silas is Juliet’s fussy psychopathic cousin. Silas sees Tybalt punch Benvolio and realizes that he is in great pain. Silas becomes very concerned about it, since Silas has a fetishistic preoccupation with pain. This preoccupation is of such a nature that it leads him to desire to stop the pain. What it is like for Silas is what it would be like for one of us if we developed a fetishistic preoccupation with purple balloons, and this preoccupation was such as to lead us to desire to pop purple balloons whenever we saw them.

C2.P10

Here, there is a consideration c (Benvolio’s pain), c is a moral reason to φ (to try to stop Tybalt), and Silas’s intrinsic concern about c leads him to desire to φ. So, if a de re account of implicit moral reasons-appreciation is right then Silas and Juliet should equally appreciate Benvolio’s pain as a moral reason to try to stop Tybalt. However, this is clearly not the right result. The problem is that though Silas is intrinsically concerned about Benvolio’s pain, that concern is of the wrong sort: it does not construe Benvolio’s pain as being bad—perhaps at all—and definitely not in the way relevant to appreciating Benvolio’s pain as a moral reason to φ.[[7]](#footnote-7) Nothing pertaining to the moral weight of painfulness makes any difference to Silas’s perspective on pain, and so there’s nothing about the moral badness of pain that affects Silas’s motivation to φ. As a result, a de re account of implicit moral reasons-appreciation is inadequate.

C2.P11

**2.3. De Dicto Accounts of Implicit Appreciation**

C2.S3

We need to say something about the kind of perspective that Juliet has on Benvolio’s pain that a lucky psychopath like Silas does not. To distinguish Juliet’s perspective from Silas’s, however, it seems we need to say something about how she de dicto construes Benvolio’s pain.

C2.P12

Moral theorists excessively focused on reflective deliberation have tended to assume that the kind of de dicto representation of moral reasons that occurs in reflective deliberation is the only kind of de dicto representation of moral reasons there is.[[8]](#footnote-8) If one makes this assumption, then it’s natural to think that one must dispense with de dicto representations of moral reasons to make sense of Juliet’s (or Huck’s) case and opt for a DE RE account of implicit appreciation instead. But the kind of de dicto representation that occurs in reflective deliberation is not the only kind of de dicto representation that there is. Below I consider and reject three alternative de dicto accounts of representation before proposing my own account.

C2.P13

**2.3.1. A Discursive Account of Implicit Appreciation**

C2.S4

Let’s look more closely at the kind of de dicto representation of moral reasons that implicit agents apparently lack:

C2.P14

Dez’s Deliberation: Dez receives a request from a student for extra credit. She’s not inclined to grant it at first, but remembers that she recently allowed another student to do extra credit. She realizes that both students are in the same class, failing, and now asking for the same opportunity. Given the parity of the cases, she realizes that considerations of fairness apply. Given that they do, she infers that she has moral reason to grant the request.

C2.P15

Dez presents the relevant considerations of parity as together constituting a moral reason to grant the extra credit request by making use of an inferentialist grasp she has of a moral reason-giving concept: fairness. That is, Dez is able to pick out these considerations as morally salient because she knows that (i) they constitute an application condition of the concept of fairness and (ii) the concept of fairness, once applied, supports inferences about moral reasons. I’ll say that Dez’s inferentialist grasp of her reasons underwrites discursive appreciation of those reasons, since it allows her to talk herself through her decision in a deliberative, step-by-step way, and also to articulate an account of her reasons to others. Applying a discursive account of appreciation to the implicit case, we get:

C2.P16

(2) DISCURSIVE: An agent implicitly appreciates a consideration c as a moral reason r iff her representation of c plays the inferentialist role it is characteristic of moral reasons-representations to play—underwriting inferences from salient application conditions to conclusions about (say) moral obligation—and she is able to articulate these inferences (at least with Socratic prodding).[[9]](#footnote-9)

C2.P17

DISCURSIVE has more resources for explaining implicit moral reasons-appreciation than it may initially appear. As Dez continues to teach, she will become more adept in her assessments of fairness, and she may ultimately be able to bypass deliberation altogether: she may eventually learn to intuit or “see” what to do in new cases without formulating any discursive thoughts about what her reasons are. If she does this, her old inferentialistically characterized concept of fairness will not thereby necessarily have been made obsolete. It may still be fundamentally responsible for how she sorts through information and draws conclusions, perhaps operating via the influence of cognitive penetration on her experience. If this is indeed the way that Dez’s appreciation of her reasons develops, it will be evidenced by her continued and non-confabulatory ability to articulate an account of her reasons when called on to do so.

C2.P18

Many of those interested in understanding non-deliberative modes of reasons-responsiveness have emphasized cases like Dez’s—cases of articulate skilled agency, where agents “see” what to do without first needing to explicitly reason about it, but are nevertheless also poised to answer Anscombean “what” and “why” questions about their actions.[[10]](#footnote-10) However, cases of implicit moral reasons-appreciation like Huck and Juliet’s can’t be explained in the same way as such cases of articulate skilled agency. Unlike the skilled Dez, agents like Huck and Juliet don’t have a tacitly operative inferentialist grasp of their reasons for φ-ing. Huck, for instance, does not have an inferentialistically characterized grasp of the concept of (say) free and equal moral agency, and so can’t articulate even a post facto account of his φ-ings that adverts to it.

C2.P19

**2.3.2. A Causal Tracking Account of Implicit Appreciation**

C2.S5

Philosophers of mind have conventionally offered two theories of mental representation that may help account for agents’ non-discursive, but still de dicto, appreciation of moral reasons: causal theories and functional theories. According to causal theories of representation, a mental representation m represents p by virtue of being a token of a type of representation that stands in a suitably reliable causal tracking relation with p-types of things.[[11]](#footnote-11) Drawing on a causal theory of representation, we might propose:

C2.P20

(3) CAUSAL TRACKING: An agent implicitly appreciates a consideration c as a moral reason r to φ iff her representation of c is of a type that causally tracks moral reasons for φ-ing.[[12]](#footnote-12)

C2.P21

Causal tracking may be necessary for implicit moral reasons-appreciation, but it does not also appear to be sufficient. This is because it seems there will always be deviant ways of tracking relevant considerations. In particular, so long as moral reasons supervene on natural properties—or, for that matter, on any subvening base properties—it seems it will always be possible for an agent to track those properties without taking any notice of their practical-moral import. Consider again a lucky psychopath like Silas:

C2.P22

Silas (Causal Tracking): Silas sees Tybalt deal Benvolio a blow to the eye and realizes he’s in great pain. The pain is represented under the aspect of the same type of mental representation that, because of (say) the fortuitous forces of species evolution, is also deployed when Silas sees a murder, theft, assault, etc. Like in other cases where that representation is deployed, Silas is weirded out by the represented target. He tries to coax Tybalt to stop.[[13]](#footnote-13)

C2.P23

If causal tracking is sufficient for moral reasons-appreciation, then Silas appreciates his moral reasons just as well as Juliet does because he, like her, represents Benvolio’s pain via a moral reasons-tracking representation. But clearly, Silas does not appreciate Benvolio’s pain as a moral reason as Juliet does. So, CAUSAL TRACKING is insufficient to explain implicit moral reasons-appreciation.

C2.P24

**2.3.3. A Functional Role Account of Implicit Appreciation**

C2.S6

Another way to try to distinguish Silas from Juliet is by drawing on a functional theory of mental representation. According to this theory, a mental representation m represents p by virtue of being a token of a type of representation that plays a certain internal causal role in a subject’s cognitive economy—that is, whatever causal role it is characteristic of p-related representations to play.[[14]](#footnote-14) Drawing on this theory to give an account of implicit moral reasons-appreciation, we might say:

C2.P25

(4) FUNCTIONAL ROLE: An agent implicitly appreciates a consideration c as a moral reason r to φ iff her representation of c plays the internal causal role that it is characteristic of moral reason-representations to play.[[15]](#footnote-15)

C2.P26

Though some argue that phenomenology itself can be understood in functional terms, functionalist theories of representation typically avoid appeal to phenomenology. Given that they do, the possibility of a spectrum inversion prevents them from adequately distinguishing Silas from Juliet. Take your favorite dispositional profile for moral reasons-representations and match it with the wrong phenomenal feel; I submit that you will get a state that intuitively fails to constitute an instance of moral reasons-appreciation.

C2.P27

Silas (Functional a): When Silas represents Benvolio’s pain, he experiences—associated with that representation—a feeling of itchiness. The itchy feel of the representation prompts Silas to try to stop the pain (which he senses will relieve the itch), and so Silas tells Tybalt to stop. Silas has the same experience with other representations of people being in pain: they feel itchy, and cause him to take steps to relieve the pain.

C2.P28

We can suppose that Silas’s representation of Benvolio’s pain plays the same functional role as Juliet’s: Silas rushes equally quickly to aid Benvolio, attends to all the same features as she does, displays the relevant punishing behaviors towards Tybalt, and so on. Indeed, we can “wire” into Silas, at birth, all the dispositions he needs to duplicate the causal-functional profile of a typical moral agent, but then invert the phenomenal feels normally associated with these dispositions:

C2.P29

Silas (Functional b): The dispositions associated with our representation of a moral reason not to φ, instead of being harnessed to feelings of indignation and the like, are harnessed to feelings of unseemliness and being weirded-out. The dispositions associated with our representation of a moral reason to φ are harnessed to feelings of arousal and titillation rather than to feelings of moral admiration and the like.

C2.P30

I grant that FUNCTIONAL ROLE may capture a necessary condition on implicit moral reasons-appreciation. But if it also offers a sufficient condition on such appreciation, then Silas (Functional a and b) and Juliet will equally well appreciate their moral reasons. Clearly, however, this is not the right result, and so a functionalist account of implicit moral reasons-appreciation is inadequate. Like the de re account and the causal account of implicit appreciation, it fails to differentiate lucky psychopaths from genuine moral agents.

C2.P31

**2.4. A Phenomenological Account of Implicit Appreciation**

C2.S7

**2.4.1. A Cognitive Phenomenology Account of Implicit Appreciation**

C2.S8

Functionalist and causal tracking theories of representation avoid appeal to phenomenology in part because the computational theory of mind that originally motivated them aimed to disentangle investigation into the mind’s operations from discussions about the nature of consciousness.[[16]](#footnote-16) Recently, however, philosophers of mind have taken renewed interest in the role of phenomenology in mental representation. Some have proposed a cognitive phenomenology account of representation, according to which a representation m represents p by virtue of being a token of a type of representation that is associated with a distinctive type of phenomenal feel q.[[17]](#footnote-17) Whatever its merits as a general theory of representation, I suggest that this account can help specify a necessary condition on implicit moral reasons-appreciation:

C2.P32

(5) PHENOMENOLOGY: An agent implicitly appreciates a consideration c as a moral reason r to φ only if her representation of c is (at least in paradigmatic and non-derivative cases) associated with phenomenal feel qM.

C2.P33

I’ll assume a weak version of PHENOMENOLOGY on which (i) qM may be either sui generis or reducible to a “cocktail” of other phenomenal feels (sensory, affective, etc.), and (ii) not every instance of appreciative representation must be accompanied by qM. As a phenomenologically-laden presentation of red might establish a representational kind that can be re-tokened—perhaps via anaphoric reference—without the agent’s having to re-experience the relevant phenomenology with each re-tokening, so also, I’ll assume, a phenomenologically laden instance of implicit appreciation may establish a representational kind that can be re-tokened without the agent’s each time having to re-experience that phenomenology.

C2.P34

We’ve already seen preliminary support for PHENOMENOLOGY. We’ve seen Silas entertain Benvolio’s pain under the aspect of a feeling of a fetishistic preoccupation, itchiness, and an unseemliness that weirds him out, and it seems that part of what is “off” about Silas’s representation of Benvolio’s pain in each of these cases is the phenomenology associated with it. If that’s right, there’s already a weak version of PHENOMENOLOGY that is true, in which qM refers to some restricted range of—perhaps disjunctive—phenomenological feels. Ideally, however, we’d be able to find some more unified set of phenomenal feels for qM to refer to. To do that, it helps to start by considering cases of moral reasons-appreciation that are more familiar to our imagination than the cases of implicit appreciation we’ve focused on so far. Once we’ve used these cases to focus attention on the relevant phenomenology, we can return to assess its applicability to the implicit case.

C2.P35

To begin, consider Vegetarian:

C2.P36

Vegetarian: You’re at the grocery store and are excited to see your favorite cut of steak on sale. In the shelf next to it is a display of tofu. You love the taste of meat and don’t have any appetite for tofu, but you’ve recently learned about the agricultural industry’s inhumane practices towards animals. Upon considering the inhumane practices you’ve learned about, you now feel compelled to pass up the steak and reach for the tofu instead, since you realize there are excellent moral reasons to do so.

C2.P37

When you realize there is a moral reason to buy the tofu rather than the steak, you feel a force directed at buying tofu, lending weight to it and soliciting you to do it, in a particular authoritative way—even despite your lack of an appetite for tofu. This force is anchored in the consideration you appreciate as a moral reason: the inhumane treatment of animals presents itself with an authoritative directive force “pointing” you to purchase non-meat products. Similar phenomenology is also present in other paradigm cases of appreciation of moral reasons. You experience, say, the consideration that your elderly neighbor is lonely and loves baseball as lending weight to taking her to the game; you see someone being harassed on the street and experience a felt demand to step in; or perhaps you consider the categorical imperative, and feel solicited to be honest in your tax papers.[[18]](#footnote-18)

C2.P38

This experience of authoritative solicitation appears to be a good candidate for qM, since it seems to be able to distinguish Juliet’s perspective on Benvolio’s pain from Silas’s. QM plausibly inheres in Juliet’s experience when she sees Tybalt injuring Benvolio: when she sees that Benvolio is in pain, it plausibly strikes her as authoritatively calling out for, or directing her, to try to stop Tybalt. On the other hand, Silas seems to lack that phenomenology. When Silas experiences Benvolio’s pain as itchy, unseemly, or the target of a fetishistic preoccupation, he may feel incited, pushed, or “triggered” by that pain to stop Tybalt, but that is distinct from Juliet’s experience of the pain as summoning her via an authoritative, governing mandate to step in.[[19]](#footnote-19) This understanding of qM also helps make sense of Huck’s case. Huck’s decision to aid Jim is plausibly not based on considerations that have impressed him as neutral stimuli, but on a kind of visceral impression of (something like) Jim’s equal moral personhood, that “calls out” in a governing way for him to support Jim in his journey to freedom.[[20]](#footnote-20)

C2.P39

Since we in the analytic tradition are not accustomed to reflecting on subtle differences in phenomenology, it may help strengthen our grasp of qM—and also reinforce its applicability to the implicit case—to situate it within a wider spectrum of non-discursive, experiential representations. QM, I’ll now suggest, is one among a variety of such representations that have modal contents.

C2.P40

**2.4.2. A Non-Discursive Experiential Representation?**

C2.S9

To begin, consider our representational capacities as they pertain to a broad class of possibilities concerning how physical states of affairs in the world are, might, or will be. When I see a log teetering at the edge of a cliff-side, I can see that it is precariously perched, and so might possibly fall; then I see, as it teeters, that it is almost certainly going to fall, and then that it is now about to and is definitely going to fall. Here, I experience what we might categorize as nomic modalities. These are experiences as of nomic realities that we don’t need sophisticated discursively articulable concepts to represent. Thus, a small child who lacks an inferentialist grasp of the concept of nomic possibility can nevertheless see that the log might fall or now definitely will fall, and so on.[[21]](#footnote-21)

C2.P41

A second set of modalities that it seems we can non-discursively, experientially represent are dynamic modalities—that is, modalities involving possibilities and necessities that involve us as agents. Here, on the side of possibility, you can (for instance) look down a path, see obstructions, but also see that the path can be traversed. Following the work of J. J. Gibson ([1986](#B18)), psychologists have termed this kind of representation of a possibility for agency in an environment an “affordance.” Thus, they say, a chair affords sitting, a door affords opening, and so on.

C2.P42

In addition to experientially presenting φ-ing as something that (dynamically) can possibly be done, we can also experientially present φ-ing as something that (dynamically) may well be done or must be done.[[22]](#footnote-22) Thus, someone who feels an inclination to get fresh air may experience a door as something that may well be opened, whereas a claustrophobic person who feels a compulsion to get out of the room may experientially represent the door as something that must be opened. As before, experiential representations of these dynamic modalities don’t seem to require discursive competence on the part of the representing subject. Plausibly, a young claustrophobic child can present the door as something that must be opened, for instance, without having the inferentialist conceptual competences to talk about the dynamic necessity of opening doors. In these cases more so than in the nomic ones, the distinctive phenomenology of the experiential representation seems to contribute to determining its contents. For instance, it seems to be by virtue of the kind of phenomenal feel that a compulsion has—a feeling of being propelled or “pushed” to φ—that φ-ing is represented as something that has to be done.[[23]](#footnote-23)

C2.P43

In addition to having experiences that present it as being the case that something (nomically) might or will happen, or that something (dynamically) can or has to be done, we also have experiences that present it to be the case that something normatively may be done or is required to be done. Here we have experiential representations on the side of possibility in (say) cases of arbitrary choice. Consider a case where two paths diverge in a wood, and you see what appears to be a nice shady place to rest under a tree down one path. Your representation of this consideration may have a feeling of felt relevance associated with it as you consider whether you might want to sit. But then, when you decide that there’s no reason to sit down right now, that felt relevance comes to naught: it provides no soliciting force “pointing” or “directing” you to go down that path rather than the other.

C2.P44

Contrast this case with cases where we have a stronger experience of deontic necessity. You see someone being harassed on the street and have an experience as of being mandated to step in; or an artist, coming close to the end of her performance, feels compelled by the music—aesthetically demanded—to perform a grand finale of this sort. These considerations—that someone is being harassed, or the flow of the music up to this point—don’t merely trigger a felt propulsion or “push” to φ (though they may also have the effect of stimulating such a feeling), rather, they summon you to φ by virtue of a kind of commanding authority. Other cases fall between these experiences of arbitrary choice and deontic necessity. Thus, I may experience the consideration that (say) my elderly neighbor is lonely and loves baseball as having a felt relevance to the question of whether to bring her to a baseball game, and as lending weight to an affirmative response to that question, without also experiencing it as mandating me to take her to the game. Whether a consideration is experienced as merely lending weight to φ-ing in this way or otherwise as generating a felt demand to φ, however, the experience of being “called to” φ is still marked by the sense of being under the jurisdiction of a governing authority. Thus it is that I “feel the force” of the consideration as a reason to φ.[[24]](#footnote-24)

C2.P45

As in the nomic and dynamic cases, an agent doesn’t need a discursive grasp of relevant deontic concepts to experientially represent deontic contents. Consider Jasmine:

C2.P46

Jasmine: Jasmine is a young jazz piano virtuoso. Listening intently to the flow of the music, she hears the particular way in which a G-seventh chord is played by the band. Jasmine doesn’t know any formal jazz theory and doesn’t have any discursive grasp of the concept of an “aesthetic” reason, but when she hears that chord, she experiences it as having a kind of directive force “pointing to” and soliciting her to ease into a C-major-seventh chord just so.

C2.P47

Jasmine plausibly appreciates the consideration that the G-seventh chord was played just so, as an aesthetic reason to ease into the C-major-seventh chord just so via her experiential representation of the former as directing or soliciting her towards the latter, without employing (or being able to employ) any discursive representation of the former as an aesthetic reason for the latter. So also, it’s plausible that a consideration can strike an agent like Huck or Juliet as a moral reason to φ via their experiential representation of that consideration as directing or soliciting them to φ, even though they don’t (or can’t) employ any discursive representation of that consideration as a moral reason to φ.

C2.P48

**2.4.3. A Distinctive Moral Phenomenology?**

C2.S10

We now have a fuller framework for distinguishing Juliet’s experiential presentation of Benvolio’s pain from Silas’s. While Juliet’s presentation of Benvolio’s pain via the phenomenological aspect of a felt mandate falls in the range of non-discursive presentations of deontic reasons, Silas’s presentation of Benvolio’s pain via the phenomenological aspect of (say) a fetishistic preoccupation involves a feeling of being incited, propelled, or driven to φ, and so plausibly falls in the spectrum of non-discursive presentations of dynamic facts. But what, if anything, distinguishes Juliet’s experiential presentation of Benvolio’s pain as a moral reason, from the experiential presentation of that pain as some other kind of deontic reason—say, an aesthetic or prudential one?

C2.P49

Phenomenal qualities are by nature difficult to describe, and they become even more so as the contrasts between them become more subtle. Even when descriptions are elusive, though, we can discern phenomenal contrasts by “pointing” to illustrative examples. I’ll focus for now on this illustrative approach, and offer only a preliminary description of the relevant moral phenomenology. I leave a more detailed description for a later study.

C2.P50

Consider two pious religious parents who own an artefact they regard as sacred. They take its sacred status to generate certain moral demands—for instance, it must be put in a place of honor, on a certain pedestal in the living room. The parents have a son, Sid, who has learned to exactly mimic the patterns of treatment they take to be morally required. When he countenances the artefact, however, he does not share their inner experience of it.

C2.P51

At first, Sid’s patterns of behavior with respect to the artefact—for instance, his careful placement of the artefact on its designated pedestal—feel like rote and wholly unmotivated habits. He is numb to the force of any reasons to treat it with special regard. But now consider three different ways in which he may come to appreciate a reason to φp: move the artefact to its pedestal from where it has mistakenly tumbled to the floor.

C2.P52

Practical Purpose: After a long day, Sid collapses onto the comfortable living room sofa. He notices the artefact on the floor, and realizes that if his parents walk in the room and see the artefact there, they will chide and criticize him for not picking it up. Though Sid feels sluggish and is not otherwise inclined to get up from his comfortable place on the sofa, he experiences φp-ing as fitting or suited to the attainment of his desire to avoid this result. Cognizant of this fit, he feels directed to φp.

C2.P53

Aesthetic Completion: Years later, Sid returns home after a long day of taking art classes at college. He collapses onto the sofa, but then notices the artefact on the floor. Gazing at the artefact, he considers how it might look up on the pedestal. He is struck by how the placement of the artefact on the pedestal would “complete” the picture, aesthetically—supporting a delicate, unified coherence of presentation that is now lacking. Though Sid feels sluggish and is not otherwise inclined to get up from his comfortable place on the sofa, he now also experiences a sense of being directed to effect that perfect completion.[[25]](#footnote-25)

C2.P54

In Practical Purpose and Aesthetic Completion, Sid shifts from being numb to reasons for φp-ing to appreciating two different kinds of deontic reasons to φp, and it seems that this shift is attended with a shift in the phenomenal quality of his experience: what it is like to feel compelled by the “fit” of aesthetic completion is different from what it was like to feel compelled by the “fit” of means well-suited to his ends.

C2.P55

Now imagine a final, moral transformation:

C2.P56

Moral Appreciation: As an adult, Sid undergoes a religious conversion. After a long day at work, Sid collapses onto the sofa. But then he notices the artefact on the floor. Contemplating the artefact, he now feels the weight of the special kind of moral authority its sacred status exerts. Though Sid feels sluggish and is not otherwise inclined to get up from his comfortable place on the sofa, he now also experiences a sense of being solemnly directed to place the artefact in its deserved place on the pedestal.

C2.P57

However we describe the details of the adult Sid’s experience of appreciating a moral reason to φp, it is plausibly distinct from his experiences as a youngster, of appreciating aesthetic or practical reasons to φp. Feeling directed by the “fit” of moral rightness is new to him in this context; his previous experiences of feeling directed by the “fit” of means well-suited to an end and the “fit” of aesthetic completion did not acquaint him with what it’s like to appreciate the moral reasons to φp.

C2.P58

Sid’s example is especially useful because it’s not difficult to imagine the phenomenal quality of his experience of the artefact changing even while his other, non-phenomenological dispositions stay more or less constant from the original rote habits he picked up as a kid. His distinct experience of the artefact as imparting moral—verses aesthetic or prudential—reasons, however, is also present in other cases of moral reasons-appreciation. Consider, for instance, three people at a bar who feel directed to keep their distance from a stranger—but in different ways: one anticipating the practical repercussions of a negative reaction, another in awe of the stranger’s pristine aesthetic beauty, and a third who feels the governing force exerted by the moral import of her dignity. Or three hikers who gaze out over a landscape of rolling hills of forest—one, a conqueror, entertaining it as a means well-suited to her economic ends, another in wonder of its natural beauty, and a third apprehending it as a living community that compels her respect.[[26]](#footnote-26) In each case, the person who appreciates the relevant intentional object as affording moral reasons plausibly has an experiential encounter with it that the others miss out on. Indeed, that person may reasonably complain that the others’ experiential perspectives on the object fail to do justice to the moral force of the reasons that apply. The same lesson also seems to pertain to Juliet and Silas. Suppose Silas is a prudent politician, who encounters Benvolio’s pain as ill-suited to the end of procuring his vote, or a pure aesthete—an overly avid actor who sees the whole world as a stage and experiences Benvolio’s pain as a tasteless distraction to the “flow” of the dramatic narrative. Even if Silas’s non-phenomenal dispositions somehow manage to fortuitously mirror those of Juliet’s, the quality of his experience of Benvolio’s pain will still be worryingly “off.” Juliet could rightly complain that he fails to “pick up on” what really matters, in virtue of the felt quality of his experiential encounter with Benvolio’s pain.

C2.P59

In everyday experience, phenomenology is often not as well compartmentalized as it is in these examples—and even when it is, we may not be paying close enough attention to “register” its distinctive qualities. But these examples help illuminate contrasts between the phenomenology of appreciating a consideration as a moral reason, verses a prudential or aesthetic one. After all, there doesn’t seem to be just one generic experience of deontic reasons that all the agents in all our scenarios have—so that what could differentiate them is only (for instance) distinct dispositional profiles that are arbitrarily paired with one generic kind of deontic experience. If anything, it seems that it is variations in the felt quality of the agents’ experience that would motivate differences in dispositions downstream, by way of underwriting the appreciation of different kinds of reasons.

C2.P60

Supposing that the above examples successfully highlight a contrast between the phenomenology of moral reasons-appreciation and the appreciation of other deontic reasons, what preliminary description of the former might we offer? To begin, it’s worth noting that the phenomenology of moral reasons-appreciation isn’t necessarily distinguished by how vivid or intense the experience of the felt demand is. A committed aesthete may feel the force of aesthetic reasons more vividly than he feels the force of moral reasons. Additionally, the phenomenology of moral reasons-appreciation isn’t necessarily distinguished by the felt priority of relevant demands. The weight of the moral reasons speaking in favor of taking my elderly neighbor to a baseball game, for instance, may not be experienced as overriding my prudential reasons to (say) complete my errands or my aesthetic reasons to (say) finish playing through the orchestral masterpiece I’ve started.

C2.P61

Instead, what seems distinctive of the experience of a moral reason is the peculiar kind of felt independence of the authority the reason feels to exert. This felt independence is a feature of moral experience that both cognitivists and non-cognitivists have noticed and tried to accommodate[[27]](#footnote-27)—but it is difficult to specify just what it consists in. Prudential and aesthetic reasons of course also involve some degree of felt independence. They also feel to govern over me, and so aren’t experienced as being entirely at my beck and call. Still, in the case of my appreciation of a consideration as a moral reason to φ, the source of the demand to φ seems to be anchored “outside” of me in some more profound and robust way than in the practical and aesthetic case. I experience the bounds of these latter reasons’ jurisdiction over me as being more actively constrained by my idiosyncratic desires and sensibilities than in the moral case.[[28]](#footnote-28) When I experience there as being a prudential reason to (say) take my car to the mechanic today—because this is well-suited to my end of enjoying a long drive tomorrow—I experience the authority of this prudential reason as in some respect resting on, or drawing its normative power from, my own higher-order desire to go for a long drive tomorrow. Since the authority of the prudential reason is experienced as in this respect dependent on my higher-order desire to go for a long drive, it also feels that if I no longer desired to go for a long drive, I could gut that practical reason of its binding force. Not so for moral reasons. The authority of the moral reasons to take my neighbor to the baseball game isn’t experienced as drawing its normative power from, and so being dependent on, my higher-order desires. As a result, it also doesn’t feel that I could gut the moral reasons to take my neighbor to the baseball game of their reason-giving force just by (say) changing my desire to be kind.

C2.P62

Analogous considerations apply in the aesthetic case. When I experience there as being an aesthetic reason to (say) finish my orchestral masterpiece on the right note, I do not experience the authority of that reason as depending directly on my desires, as in the prudential case; instead, I experience the aesthetic reason to finish on the right note as proceeding from the internal norms of coherence and completeness exerted by the piece. Nevertheless, I plausibly experience the authority of these norms of coherence and completeness as itself being dependent on some deeper resonance between those norms and my own aesthetic sensibilities. The authority of these norms to demand me to φ feels to rest in part on some intimate cooperation between these norms and my basic musical sensitivities: it feels that I could have “stepped outside” the jurisdiction of these norms if I had had the radically altered sensibilities of (say) a sophisticated Tuvan throat singer. Things are once again different in the moral case. The authority of a moral reason to direct my action doesn’t feel to depend in the same crucial way on the resonance of any associated moral norms with my own idiosyncratic sensibilities. When I appreciate the force of the reason to take my elderly neighbor to the baseball game, it doesn’t feel like I could have “stepped outside” of that reason’s jurisdiction just by virtue of having had the thoroughly altered sensibilities of (say) a sophisticated Nazi.

C2.P63

**2.5. Phenomenology and Ordinary Moral Reasons-Appreciation**

C2.S11

So far I have argued that an agent who implicitly appreciates a consideration as a moral reason to φ must present that consideration via the light of a particular phenomenologically-mediated mode of presentation—one that presents the relevant consideration via the light of a felt directive force “pointing” towards φ-ing, lending weight to it, or soliciting it, in a particular authoritative way. To close, I’ll suggest that the phenomenal component of implicit moral reasons-appreciation may also provide insight into the nature of ordinary moral reasons-appreciation, since it can serve to enhance both cognitivists’ and non-cognitivists’ accounts of such appreciation.

C2.P64

**2.5.1. Non-Cognitivists and the Attitude Specification Problem**

C2.S12

According to non-cognitivists, an agent appreciates a consideration as a moral reason to φ if and only if she has certain pro-attitudes towards φ-ing in light of that consideration.[[29]](#footnote-29) Non-cognitivists face the challenge, however, of specifying which kinds of pro-attitudes support moral reasons-appreciation.[[30]](#footnote-30) Some non-cognitivists suggest that relevant pro-attitudes may be distinguished by their functional roles,[[31]](#footnote-31) but the spectrum inversion argument used earlier against the functional account of implicit moral reasons-appreciation undermines the plausibility of this proposal. (After all, that argument targeted the functional account’s ability to explain the moral, rather than the implicit, aspect of such appreciation.) It behooves a non-cognitivist, then, to consider making reference to pro-attitudes’ phenomenological features, and not just their functional roles:

C2.P65

(6) PHENOMENOLOGICAL PRO-ATTITUDE: An agent appreciates a consideration c as a moral reason r to φ iff her representation of c underwrites an appropriate pro-attitude a towards φ-ing, where a is specified in part by reference to its phenomenal features.

C2.P66

We can highlight one phenomenal feature that a must have by revisiting the kind of case where it is absent:

C2.P67

Silas’s Compulsion: When Silas thinks about Benvolio—who is by now in the hospital—as being in pain, it triggers in him a brute compulsive desire to send a get-well card. The desire, he feels, could be resisted, but it feels totally inexplicable and out of the blue. What it is like for Silas is what it would be like for one of us if hearing a high-pitched sound suddenly triggered a brute compulsive desire to stand up and jump up and down. The drive to φ feels to be caused by the stimulus, but φ-ing doesn’t feel to “make sense” in light of it.

C2.P68

Silas’s brute compulsive desire may play the functional role that appreciation of a moral reason would, but it nevertheless fails to underwrite such appreciation. This is because, though the desire involves a “pro”-presentation of φ-ing as to-be-done, it presents φ-ing as to-be-done in the wrong manner: in a manner that fails to connect the to-be-donedness of φ-ing in the right way to Benvolio’s pain. For Silas to construe Benvolio’s pain as a reason to send a get-well card, his pro-attitude must feel different from this compulsive desire: it must make the to-be-donedness of φ-ing, feel not merely causally triggered by the representation of Benvolio’s pain, but rather made worthwhile, warranted, or—most broadly—as something that “makes sense” to do, in light of his pain. But that means the pro-attitude must also construe Benvolio’s pain in a certain light. Plausibly, that pro-attitude must construe the pain so as to make it feel connected to sending a get-well card by “calling out” for or speaking in favor of sending a get-well card in some way.

C2.P69

This “calling out” for φ-ing, moreover, can’t be of just any sort. If the pro-attitude construes Benvolio’s pain as calling out for φ-ing, but this calling out is underwritten by (e.g.) Silas’s aesthetic feeling of the demands of dramatic narrative flow, it still won’t serve to construe Benvolio’s pain as a moral reason to φ. Instead, the pro-attitude must build into itself a different kind of feeling—one that construes Benvolio’s pain as “calling out” for sending Benvolio a card via the light of that kind of authoritative solicitation relevant to the phenomenal appreciation of moral reasons. If this is right, then non-cognitivists will need to draw on my phenomenal account of moral reasons-appreciation to solve the attitude specification problem. Their account of ordinary moral reasons-appreciation will thus need to include the phenomenological component I have discussed.

C2.P70

**2.5.2. Cognitivism and Moral Motivation**

C2.S13

Cognitivists’ account of ordinary moral-reasons appreciation may also benefit from incorporating reference to a phenomenological component. The inadequacy of causal and functionalist accounts of implicit moral reasons-appreciation stemmed from their failure to account for the moral rather than the implicit aspect of such appreciation, so these accounts are also inadequate to fully explain ordinary moral reasons-appreciation. The discursive account of implicit moral reasons-appreciation, however, ran aground specifically because of the implicit aspect of that appreciation, and so we still need to consider whether it can deliver cognitivists an account of ordinary moral reasons-appreciation that doesn’t make reference to phenomenology. It appears that it cannot. For consider:

C2.P71

Silas (Discursive): Silas receives and believes testimony from a moral expert giving him a complete specification of the correct moral theory. His patterns of inference mirror the network of inferences relevant to the moral reason-giving concepts of that theory, and he comes to act as a pure ratiocinator with respect to it. When you present him with a consideration—like Benvolio is in pain—he cranks it through his theoretical algorithms and infers the appropriate conclusions about what he has moral reason to do. But, though he believes the inferred claim that helping Benvolio is the moral thing to do, he doesn’t experience that as in any way demanded of him, or feel the weight of Benvolio’s pain as bearing at all on the practical question of what to do.[[32]](#footnote-32)

C2.P72

Silas has a discursive representation of Benvolio’s pain as a moral reason to stop Tybalt, but he appreciates Benvolio’s pain only (at best) as an epistemic reason to believe helping Benvolio is the moral thing to do, and not as a practical moral reason to help Benvolio. So what is missing? A phenomenal account of moral reasons-appreciation provides a plausible answer: Silas must also present Benvolio’s pain under the light of a felt solicitation demanding him to φ. It is by presenting Benvolio’s pain under the light of this sort of felt solicitation that Silas will come to feel the weight of that consideration as having practical relevance to the question of what he should do, and so—intuitively—will come to appreciate Benvolio’s pain as a moral reason to help Benvolio. Since it now appears that none of the major theories of mental representation cognitivists could utilize can explain ordinary moral reasons-appreciation without some supplementary appeal to a phenomenal component, it seems that cognitivists’ account of ordinary appreciation will (like that of non-cognitivists) need to draw on my phenomenal account of moral reasons-appreciation.

C2.P73

A phenomenal account of moral reasons-appreciation may also support cognitivists’ in giving a plausible account of moral motivation. Relative to other descriptive judgments, judgments about what one has moral reason to do have a marked tendency to motivate action, but cognitivists typically have difficulty explaining why this is so since they can’t (as non-cognitivists do) fall back on the idea that moral judgments are expressions of pro-attitudes. One way cognitivists can try to explain moral motivation is to say that moral judgments motivate in the same way that other descriptive judgments do: by being appropriately paired with standing de dicto desires. Just as my judgment that My car won’t drive motivates me to bring it to the mechanic because I have a standing de dicto desire to drive my car, so also (cognitivists may suggest) my judgment that I have moral reason to φ motivates me to φ because I have a standing de dicto desire to do the moral thing. Critics, however, argue that this “standing desire” account of moral motivation makes moral agents objectionably “fetishistic” about morality. If it is right, after all, the motivation of someone like Juliet to help Benvolio is just a byproduct of her generic, abstract de dicto desire to do the right thing. But, it is complained, a good moral agent’s motivation should not be derivative in this way. Instead, critics claim, the right picture of Juliet as a good moral agent must depict her motivation as stemming directly from her concern about the moral reason-constituting features of the world—e.g. Benvolio’s pain.[[33]](#footnote-33)

C2.P74

A phenomenal account of moral reasons-appreciation can help cognitivists avoid this criticism while remaining faithful to their descriptivist understanding of moral representation. On the one hand, moral solicitations may be understood descriptively and as separable from pro-attitudes. Perhaps an evil demon can consider Benvolio’s pain under the aspect of a representation that “asks for” or solicits her to help without having any pro-attitudes towards helping, if she just continually dismisses or refuses to answer that call. On the other hand, though feeling a moral solicitation to φ may be separable from having a pro-attitude towards φ-ing, such a solicitation is intuitively the sort of thing that is well-poised to motivate. After all, a solicitation does solicit a response, and answering or “saying yes to” the call of a solicitation to φ is naturally understood as constituting a motivating desire to φ.[[34]](#footnote-34) If cognitivists understand moral motivation in these terms, moreover, they need no longer appeal to a generic de dicto desire to do the moral thing. Benvolio’s pain itself calls out to Juliet, authoritatively demanding her concern, and it is this consideration—thus appreciated as a moral reason—that directly and underivatively gives rise to her desire to help Benvolio.

C2.P75

**2.6. Conclusion**

C2.S14

What it’s like to be a moral agent in the world is more than what it’s like to feel pain or see red; there’s a way it feels to walk in the space of moral reasons, and if you lack this feeling, you lack something important about that walk. Starting with cases of implicit agency like Huck and Juliet’s, I have tried to show what this feeling is—what, in particular, it is for an agent to appreciate a consideration as a moral reason. I have suggested that (at least in non-derivative cases), appreciation of a consideration as a moral reason requires that the agent presents that consideration via the light of a felt authoritative force “pointing” towards φ-ing—lending weight to it, or soliciting it—in a particular authoritative way.

C2.P76

If correct, this account of moral reasons-appreciation sheds light on several important discussions about moral agency and understanding. First, it provides resources for developing a better understanding of a variety of forms of “marginal” moral agency that involve the implicit appreciation of moral reasons—for instance, the agency of subjects who are victim to hermeneutical injustices,[[35]](#footnote-35) those who face cognitive developmental challenges,[[36]](#footnote-36) and even that of non-human animals. Second, it suggests that—contra the claims of some[[37]](#footnote-37)—robots cannot be full-fledged moral agents unless and until they are also phenomenally conscious. Third and finally, it may urge us to recognize a more significant role for moral experience in underwriting inter-personal moral understanding. In particular, if phenomenology is critical to moral reasons-appreciation, then the development of inter-cultural moral understanding will plausibly require first-personal moral experience and not just academic study. We will need to know what it is like to have relevant considerations “call out” to us—as they do to our interlocutors—with a solicitive force directed at φ-ing. I leave further investigation into these important potential payoffs of a phenomenal account of moral reasons-appreciation for later study.[[38]](#footnote-38)

C2.P77

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1. My conception of a “psychopath” (as in the subtitle) is taken from philosophical folklore, which holds that a psychopath is someone who is by constitution utterly imperceptive of moral considerations, considered as such, and numb to their reason-giving force. This should be sharply distinguished from any actual psychiatric condition recognized by the American Psychiatric Association—e.g. anti-social personal disorder, to which it may bear little resemblance. See Jalava and Griffiths ([2017](#B27)). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For discussion of Huck’s case see e.g. Arpaly ([2002](#B4)), Bennett ([1974](#B8)), and Markovits ([2010](#B32)). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. I assume that for an agent to be morally praiseworthy for φ-ing, her φ-ing must at least be traceable to a prior appreciation of moral reasons. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See the conclusion for more discussion of how my proposal relates to issues of agency. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See n. 18 for a discussion of related proposals, including proposals that link moral reasons-appreciation to emotions. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See also Smith ([1994](#B43): 71–6). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. If one substitutes Benvolio’s pain with the concepts of the correct moral theory (e.g. MAXIMIZE HAPPINESS), this point also provides an objection against Arpaly and Schroeder ([2013](#B5)). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Markovits ([2010](#B32)) and Arpaly (2002) motivate their accounts by denying that an agent must believe that φ-ing is right to be creditable for φ-ing, and seem to assume that belief requires discursive representation. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Jackson and Pettit ([1995](#B26)) and, for a related account, Wedgwood ([2007](#B45)). See also Peacocke ([1992](#B36)). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Annas ([2011](#B3): 20) and Railton ([2009](#B39)). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Thus, the rings on a tree trunk might represent the years a tree has lived because the former reliably causally “track” the latter. See Dretske (1988), Fodor (1990), and Millikan ([2004](#B33)). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Railton ([2014](#B40): 816, 829–3) and Allman and Woodward ([2008](#B2)) partially rely on CAUSAL TRACKING. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This draws on Millikan’s account. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Thus, the mermaid Ariel represents a fork as a hairbrush because her representation of the fork plays the functional role that hairbrush-representations typically play—causing her to (e.g.) brush her hair with the fork and to think of the fork when she wishes to untangle her hair. See Block (1986) and Harman (1973). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See e.g. Blackburn ([1998](#B10): 57–8), Gibbard ([1992](#B17): 75), and Arpaly and Schroeder ([2013](#B5)). I discuss non-cognitivism further in the last section. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Fodor ([1987](#B14)) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See Horgan and Tienson ([2002](#B21)), Horgan and Graham ([2013](#B20)), Pitt ([2004](#B37)), and Bayne and Montague, ([2011](#B6)). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Mandelbaum ([1955](#B31)), Hampton ([1998](#B19): ch. 3), Horgan and Timmons ([2005](#B23), [2008](#B24), n.d.), and Kriegel ([2008](#B29)) offer important discussions of moral phenomenology, but haven’t argued for its crucial importance vis-à-vis other representational modes as a basis for either implicit or ordinary moral reasons-appreciation. Some philosophers also argue that emotions can represent evaluative properties (see Deonna and Teroni ([2011](#B12)) for an overview). But their theories aren’t yet adequate to support an account of moral reasons-appreciation. First, their theories are concerned with the representation of evaluative properties, generally, and so face the attitude-specification problem that I discuss in section 2.5.1. Second, it seems that an impassible God or a Spock-like, stoic Kantian may be able to appreciate moral reasons, even if she does not experience emotions. While an emotions-based account of moral reasons-appreciation would seem to prematurely close off this possibility, my account allows for it, since both figures are still phenomenally conscious. Third, prominent psychological accounts of emotion characterize them as involving motivation or “action-readiness” (Frijda [2007](#B16)), but some may reject the idea that moral reasons-appreciation necessarily involves motivational components—see e.g. the evil demon case in section 2.5.2. Finally, what an “emotion” is—and how it relates to moods, feelings, and other affects—is not yet well-defined; indeed some psychologists hold that phenomenological experience is not really intrinsic to emotion (Adolphs and Andler [2018](#B1)). Given these problems with an emotions-based account of moral reasons-appreciation, it is safer to hold to my phenomenological account. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. These phenomenal qualities aren’t just arbitrarily paired with contents; instead, they plausibly help account for the relevant experience having the representational content it does. Consider the difference between (i) judging that it is not good that you feel itchy (since it is distracting) and yet feeling itchy, and (ii) judging (perhaps by rationalizing) that you aren’t morally required to give food to someone begging on the street, and yet experiencing a felt mandate to give him charity. There is plausibly a kind of cognitive dissonance that occurs in (ii) but not in (i). Like when you look at a Müller-Lyer illusion and it appears to you that the lines are different lengths, but you judge that they are not, in (ii) you experience a cognitive dissonance between how the world is experientially presented to you and your considered judgment. This is evidence that the felt mandate has representational content that the itch doesn’t. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Arpaly suggests that there’s a distinct quality to Huck’s moral vision (2002: 76). In doing so, she seems to anticipate my account. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Phenomenology may or may not help determine these experiences’ representational contents. One reason to think it might is that there seems to be a phenomenal contrast between walking through solid granite cliff faces—where nothing is going anywhere—and (say) walking through the world of Dali’s paintings—where anything could happen. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Siegel ([2014](#B42))’s discussion of “felt mandates” doesn’t distinguish dynamic from deontic experiential representations. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. If you feel a compulsion to φ but judge that φ-ing isn’t necessary, you experience cognitive dissonance in a way that you plausibly don’t with, say, an accompanying feeling of nausea. This is evidence that the compulsion has representational content that nausea does not. See also n. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Epistemic modality may also be experientially presented. Consider Locke’s discussion of “evident luster” and Descartes’s discussions about “clarity” and “distinctness,” referenced in Plantinga ([1993](#B38): 57–9). See also Conee and Feldman ([2004](#B11): 64–7). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See Beardsley ([1958](#B7): 527–8). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See Leopold ([1970](#B30): 204). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. While some cognitivists claim that this felt independence is identical with the experience of being subject to a mind-independent moral order, others—including sensibility theorists and non-cognitivists—insist that it is compatible with the kind of “independent” authority of moral reasons that comes from those reasons being identified with the opinions or attitudes of the best or most decent sensibility. See Kirchin ([2003](#B28)), Horgan and Timmons ([2008](#B24)), Blackburn ([1993](#B9): 298–304), and Gibbard ([1992](#B17): 171–88). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. This doesn’t necessarily imply that they are more constrained. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Blackburn ([1998](#B10)) and Gibbard ([1992](#B17)). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Though Railton ([2009](#B39), [2014](#B40)) and the philosophers of emotion discussed in n. 18 aren’t non-cognitivists, they also face this challenge. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See n. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See Oddie ([2005](#B35): 48). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Smith ([1994](#B43): 75–6). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The Stoics thought that motivation was constituted by assent to hormetic impressions, which are much like felt solicitations. See Inwood ([1985](#B25)). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Fricker ([2007](#B15): 164). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Shoemaker ([2015](#B41): 75–7, 97–9). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. McLaughlin (n.d.); Sullins (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Thanks to the audience at the 2017 MadMeta Conference, the Rutgers Epistemology Dissertation Group, Ruth Chang, and Carolina Flores for helpful discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)