

Desiderative Truth: Caprice and the Flaws of Desire

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Granada, June 10-11, 2022. Impromptu yet fitting desire to enjoy flamenco together. Desire gratified, twice! The anguish, longing, and sorrow in the music. The passion and ecstasy in the steps. The gravity in the faces. The grief, anger, and *saudade* in their voices. You and I surrounded with our loved ones, overshadowing the Alhambra. Myriad of ineffable feelings. This look on your face: shiny eyes, compassionate smile, and pure wonder. Wasn't this the quintessence of emotional truth, Ronnie? *Obrigadissimo* for being such an inspiring and kind person to all of us.

Abstract

Ronald de Sousa has vindicated the importance of emotions in our lives. This transpires clearly through his emphasis on “emotional truth”. Like true beliefs, emotions can reflect the evaluative landscape and be true to ourselves. This article develops his insights on emotional truth by exploring the analogous phenomenon regarding desire: “desiderative truth”. According to the dominant view championed by de Sousa, goodness is the formal object of desire: a desire is fitting when its content is *good*. Desiderative truth is evaluative. I propose an alternative, deontic approach: a desire is accurate when its content *ought to be*. I contrast these two accounts by examining one type of flawed desire that has eluded philosophers’ attention: caprice. Capricious desires – as the desires expressed in children’s tantrums – are fascinating yet unfitting. What is wrong with them? I argue that evaluative truth fails to explain their inadequacy. Surprisingly, capricious desires can be about good states; in fact, this is often where the culprit lies: the object of desire is *too good* to be worth desiring. By contrast, the deontic account nicely captures what goes wrong with capricious desires. Although they can be good, the states desired are not such that they *ought to be* for one to be happy. Capricious people are too demanding and misunderstand the boundaries of happiness. As the flaw in caprice is deontic, desiderative truth is deontic truth.

Keywords

Desire – Formal Object – Emotion – Correctness Conditions – Deontic Conception – Guise of the Good – Caprice – Well-Being

Through his careful and imaginative explorations of affective states, Ronald de Sousa has succeeded at doing justice to the paramount importance of emotions in our lives and at convincing the philosophical community to take emotions seriously. This appears clearly in his delightful investigations of “emotional truth” (de Sousa 2002, 2007, 2011). De Sousa argues that the notion of truth, albeit paradigmatic of belief, outstrips belief. Emotions and affective states admit of similar achievements when they reflect what is evaluatively significant and echo our deepest concerns, maybe like the pangs and thrills felt in response to a flamenco performance. As in the case of belief, this generic sense of truth captures a great deal of the import and vicissitudes of emotions. In this article, I elaborate on de Sousa’s insights on emotional truth and on his discussion of analogous issues raised by desire. To adapt de Sousa’s apt expression, I explore “desiderative truth”. Let me start with some vignette cases offered by de Sousa that nicely illustrate the topic.

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Take, for example, the classic thought experiment in Mencius: you see a child about to fall into a well, and your apprehension of the situation immediately moves you, and you *want* to save the child. In this instance, what is apprehended is the need to intervene. Or better it is the nature of the total situation, in which the need to intervene roughly sums up the supervenient valence. Yet it is not impossible to witness the scene without being moved thus. Anyone whose experience lacks the appropriate valence, however, may be said to have an objectively *false emotion*. (de Sousa 2002: 255, my italics)

As emphasized, the desire to save the child is appropriate. Like true beliefs that hit their target, this desire perfectly reflects the significance of the situation. Desiring not to save the child, being averse towards it, or simply indifference would be mistaken, like false beliefs that miss their target.

Likewise, consider that I desire oyster ice-cream. Although this case is complex because of the subjective standards of taste (de Sousa 2002: 253-255), my desire may seem wrong to you if you think that oyster ice-cream is disgusting. Or take Nagel's (1969: 41) example of gastronomical perversion or fetishism, namely the desire to eat pictures of food (de Sousa 2003: 111). This desire is clearly troubling.

Lastly, consider the Monkey's Paw, one of the most famous examples of a fictional cursed item featuring in movies, video-games, and even in an episode of *The Simpsons*. In W. W. Jacobs's short story, the Monkey's Paw satisfies your desires but in horrible ways (de Sousa 1998: 132). For instance, if you want two hundred pounds, the Monkey's Paw will give you the money while also killing your son (de Sousa 1974: 542). As discussed by de Sousa, this case illustrates the under-specificity of the content of desire. For my purposes, it suffices to say that this is yet another case where desires go wrong.

Let us assume that these are cases of flawed, incorrect or inappropriate desire. What makes desire incorrect? When do desires miss their target, like false beliefs do? In other words, what is desiderative truth?

In the philosophical tradition, a widespread view culminating in de Sousa's work is that desiderative truth is goodness (Hazlett 2021, 2022). Desires are correct when their content is *good*, analogously (to some extent) to the idea that beliefs are correct when their content is true. Call this "evaluative truth" (ET). The aim of this article is to examine ET and to contrast it with an alternative account. According to "deontic truth" (DT), desires are correct when their content *ought to be* or, if one prefers, *should be* (Lauria 2014, Lauria 2017a). Against the tradition, I claim that desiderative truth is *deontic* – not evaluative – truth.

To that end, I will investigate a flaw of desire that has been neglected by philosophers probably because of the caprices of English language: caprice.² The word 'caprice' (originating from the Italian '*capriccio*' through its French translation '*caprice*') is seldomly used in English nowadays, although the term 'capricious' is more popular. If you spend time with young children or spoiled friends, you are

² One exception is a brief observation by Pettit & Smith (1993): 74-75 and a mention in passing in debates about mercy (Rainbolt 1997). The real exception is Lauria (2014).

probably familiar with tantrums: caprice – particularly capricious desire – is the experience underlying them. In English, the term ‘caprice’ has various literal senses, such as silly desire, sudden and irreflective impulse, or unpredictable change of mind. The object of caprice typically is food, property, sensory pleasure, or power. In contrast to English, the term is extremely common in Romanic languages: ‘*caprice*’ in French, ‘*capriccio*’ in Italian, and ‘*capricho*’ in Spanish and Portuguese. Numerous novels are devoted to it. Literary, pictorial, or musical genres are named after it. In these cultures, caprice is an important part of folk psychology. Most importantly, the term is pejorative. Describing a person or a desire as capricious is negative: capricious desires are wrong. The assessment is not as damning as with, say, clearly immoral desires. Yet caprice is a *sui generis* desiderative mistake.³

Investigating caprice matters to understand the importance of desire for the good life. Studies in educational psychology describe the pervasiveness of children’s tantrums – the overt manifestation of caprice that mostly consists of the expression of desire frustration, anger, and distress (Potegal et al. 2003, Potegal & Davidson 2003). Mature emotion regulation and the attempts of caregivers aim at discarding capricious tendencies. As it will appear, caprice questions the contours of happiness.

My goal here is to use caprice as a Litmus test for examining the two main accounts of desiderative truth. What makes capricious desires wrong or, more precisely, *incorrect*? Call this the *Puzzle of Caprice*. I claim that ET fails to solve it. Surprisingly, the object of capricious desires can be good. In fact, this is often the problem: some states are *too good* to be desirable. By contrast, DT offers an elegant solution to the puzzle. Capricious people require too much from the world: they desire states that are not such that they ought to be. The reason for the convoluted formulation is that there is a crucial difference between “Ought (not p)” and “Not (ought p)” – here I mean the latter. Objects of capricious desires may be good – they are often fabulous. Yet they are not such that they *ought to be* for one to be happy. As DT solves the puzzle of caprice, desiderative truth turns out to be deontic truth. My hope is to vindicate de Sousa’s emphasis on emotional truth by discussing a ludicrous yet critical flaw of desire that reveals its chief importance for happiness.

This article is divided into 7 sections. As preliminaries, Section 1 clarifies de Sousa’s notion of desiderative truth, Section 2 presents ET, and Section 3 sets two *desiderata* for an account of capricious desires. The critical discussion starts in section 4 where I raise my chief objection to ET. In section 5, I argue that ET has difficulties to meet our *desiderata*. Section 6 presents DT and its solution to the puzzle, while section 7 develops it in light of our *desiderata*.

1. Desiderative Truth

This section aims at clarifying the relevant notion of desiderative truth. Desires can go wrong in many ways. They can be inadequate for moral, prudential, aesthetic, epistemic, or legal reasons. Their

³ Although I focus on desire, I leave open the possibilities that other mental states can be capricious (e.g., intentions and pleasure).

wrongness may depend on personal features: some desires should be defeated by other desires, are inconsistent with other desires, manifest a bad character, or conflict with one's deepest concerns. In this paper, however, I focus on standards of correctness that bear upon the content of the desire. I focus on *incorrect* desire understood as the desiderative analogue of incorrect *qua* false belief. A distinction highlighted by de Sousa proves useful.

De Sousa (1974, 2002, 2007) distinguishes between semantic satisfaction and success of intentional states. Semantic satisfaction is the obtaining of the intentional content. When the representation has propositional content, satisfaction is the truth of the proposition. When the representation has non-propositional content, for instance objectual content (as in admiration), satisfaction is successful reference. By contrast, *success* is the condition in which the representation hits its target or attains its aim. Success is achieved when the representation complies with its proper norm.

Consider belief. In belief, satisfaction and success coincide. A belief that *p* is satisfied when *p* is true. Because beliefs aim at truth (the norm proper to belief is to believe truths), the satisfaction of belief amount to success. However, satisfaction and success often do not coincide. This is notably so for desire.

In desire, *semantic satisfaction* is the obtaining of the state desired. Leaving aside issues regarding the fineness of grain or under-specification of desiderative content (Fara 2013, de Sousa 1998), a desire for *p* is satisfied when *p* obtains. My desire for ice-cream is satisfied when I eat ice-cream or, at least, when I eat a reasonably sized scoop of ice-cream that has not been made with poisonous milk or by members of a mafioso gang, etc. Semantic satisfaction should not be conflated with *emotional satisfaction*. Satisfied desires may arouse feelings of satisfaction and happiness, but also disappointment, displeasure, disgust, and indifference. Desires may even be satisfied unbeknownst to one, in which case one will not feel satisfaction. Yet, semantically speaking, desire satisfaction is analogous to true belief: the propositional content of the representation obtains.

That said, unlike in belief, desire satisfaction differs from success. Unfulfilled desires are not wrong *per se*, unlike unsatisfied, i.e., false, beliefs. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with me desiring to be in Granada while I'm in Lisbon. Conversely, flawed desires may be satisfied. The bizarre desire to eat pictures of food may be fulfilled. This satisfied desire still misses its target. It seems to violate the norms of desire. A similar distinction holds for emotions. Consider that I'm afraid of a cute innocent puppy. My fear is satisfied if its content obtains (the puppy is gently walking towards me). Yet, as this puppy is harmless, my fear is unsuccessful; it is false. Emotional truth is success. As De Sousa (2007: 325) puts it:

success is a matter of whether the point or aim of the propositional attitude has been achieved, whether it can be rightly assessed as succeeding in its own terms. As Frege remarked long ago, 'the word "true"

indicates the aim of logic as does “beautiful” that of aesthetics or “good” that of ethics’ (Frege 1956, 289).

Success depends on the norms proper to mental states, which are determined by the formal objects of representations (Kenny 1963, Mulligan 2007, Tappolet 2010, Tappolet 2015, Teroni 2007, Deonna & Teroni 2012). One way to characterize formal objects appeals to the distinction between intentional content and intentional mode, where formal objects correspond to the latter. For instance, to believe that it rains has the content: < that it rains >. Now, in belief, this content is represented *as true*, which is the mode and formal object of belief. On this approach, formal objects are representational guises (Kriegel 2019). As Aquinas puts it, beliefs involve the guise of the truth: one cannot believe something without representing it as true (*‘sub specie veri’*). (See Mulligan 2007, Teroni 2007, Massin 2017 for other characterizations of formal objects).

What matters for my purposes is that formal objects deliver the correctness conditions or proper norms of representations. For instance, as truth is the formal object of belief, beliefs are correct when true. As observed by De Sousa (2007: 327), formal objects answer why-questions regarding justification:

We can generalize the notion of success for an intentional state by stipulating that it consists in the attainment of the state’s formal object (FO), where the FO is that which gives the trivial answer to the question: Why do you hold this attitude? Mention of the FO short-circuits a demand for justification: Why do you believe this? – Because it’s true! Why do you want this? – Because it’s good! Why do you love looking at this picture? – Because it’s beautiful!

Despite the air of tautology (“he whom I love must be lovable; what I regret must be regrettable”, de Sousa 2002: 260), formal objects are informative, as they deliver the standards of correctness of mental states. In the case of emotions, as each type of emotion plays a distinctive role, each emotion type has its proper formal object that corresponds to a specific value and that specifies the correctness conditions (Mulligan 1998, Tappolet 2016, Deonna & Teroni 2012, Brady 2013, Deonna & Teroni 2022). Objects of fear must be dangerous, objects of jealousy must “figure in a certain sort of triangle”, objects of anger must be wrongs (ibid). Values should be understood holistically and are multi-dimensional: they supervene on biological, social, and personal features.

Turning to desire, de Sousa argues that its formal object is goodness. As Aquinas put it, whereas beliefs involve the guise of the truth, desires involve the guise of the good (*‘sub specie boni’*; Oddie 2005, Tenenbaum 2007, Velleman 1992). One cannot desire something without “seeing” some good in it. Desiderative truth and success are captured by goodness.

Desire aims at the good: lack of fulfilment does not show it to be defective. It fails only if its object is not good or desirable. (de Sousa 2007: 325).

2. Evaluative Truth

This section presents ET formulated as follows:

A desire for *p* is *correct* if, and only if, *p* is good.

A desire for *p* is *incorrect* if, and only if, *p* is *not* good: *p* is bad or neutral (neither good nor bad).

Five clarifications are in place.

First, goodness should not be understood in exclusively moral terms and includes hedonic, prudential, aesthetic, legal, and epistemic value.

Second, ET does not imply that subjects ought to desire the good, interpreted as the following norm: if *p* is good, subjects ought to desire it. Failing to desire good states is not always wrong. For one thing, the subject may be unaware of the desirable state. Or maybe *p* and *q* are equally good, in which case the subject ought to suspend desire, at least in some cases. This echoes a familiar problem with norms of belief (Hazlett 2021). ET only claims that desires are correct when their content is good.

Third, I leave aside the wrong kinds of reasons problem (Crisp 2000). One may think that it is appropriate to desire a bad state (say, to drink a cup of mud) if an evil demon threatens to punish you unless you have this desire. Here I focus on the right kind of reasons.

Fourth, ET states that incorrect desires can be about neutral states. Intuitively, desiring a neutral state is incorrect. Wanting to go to a restaurant that is neither good nor bad seems unfitting, compared to the desire for a good or excellent restaurant.

Lastly, ET leaves room for correct arbitrary desires. When two options are equally good (say, acquiring one of two elegant sofas), the mere desire or preference for one option can be correct at least in some cases provided that the state is good.

ET is the standard account of desire's correctness, and it delivers the right verdict for many desires. Consider immoral, addictive, or perverted desires like the desire to eat pictures of food. These desires are flawed because their objects are not good. Or consider the Monkey's Paw: the elixir vitiates the aim of desire because it brings satisfaction in catastrophic, i.e., bad, ways.

De Sousa argues that ET explains the various ways in which desiderative truth differs from truth in belief. Consider desiderative (in-)consistency (de Sousa 1974, 2002). Antigone desires to be loyal to her brother and also desires to be a good citizen. This pair of desires is about incompatible states, since the desires cannot be jointly satisfied. However, there seems to be nothing silly about her set of desires. As both situations instantiate goodness, albeit in an incommensurable way, the conflict is not vicious like a conflict between two inconsistent beliefs. Conflicting desires are agentially problematic, yet they can adequately reflect the complex evaluative significance of situations. ET

illuminates this contrast and explains desire inconsistency in evaluative terms. The second point of demarcation between belief and desire concerns conjunction (de Sousa 1974: 542-3). If one truly believes that p and truly believes that q, then it is rational to believe (p & q); beliefs are conjunctible. Now, consider that I desire to eat shrimp now and that I also desire to eat custard now (ibid). Desiring to eat shrimp and custard now would be unfitting. ET explains this: a conjunction of goods is not necessarily good.

The pedigree of ET is hard to underestimate. As observed, it is common to think that desires involve the *guise of the good* and *aim at the good*. Anscombe (1963: 70-78) argued that desires are intelligible only if we grasp their *desirability characteristic*. The desire for a pin, for a saucer of mud, or for a cup of coffee for Sophocles' sake are odd because we fail to see the goodness in their objects. Recently, Hazlett (2021) has argued that desires can constitute evaluative knowledge. These ideas fit ET well: if desires involve the guise of the good, aim at the good, include desirability characteristics, or can constitute evaluative knowledge, ET is true.

More generally, ET is supported by the two most influential conceptions of desire: the evaluative and the motivational views. The evaluative conception holds that desires essentially are positive evaluations: to desire p is to represent p as good. Desires are evaluative seemings (Oddie 2017, Tenenbaum 2007) or evaluative attitudes (Friedrich 2017). If desires represent their content as good, they are correct when their object is good.

ET is often assumed in the (even more popular) motivational conception: to desire p is to be disposed to act in ways that bring about p (Armstrong 2002, Smith 1994). Despite its popularity, this view is rarely defended in detail (see, however, Pineda 2021). Hence it is unclear which correctness conditions the view entails. Yet, ET can be adapted to the motivational view as follows: desire is correct when the actions that fulfill the desire bring about *good* or *beneficial* outcomes. For instance, proponents of teleosemantics who adopt the motivational view argue that desires are functional when subjects act so as to bring about good outcomes (Papineau 1993, Millikan 1995). If one equates functional desires with correct desires, desire's correctness would consist of prompting good outcomes, an account that is similar to ET.

Although the evaluative and motivational conceptions are competing accounts (Schroeder 2004, Oddie 2005, Lauria & Deonna 2017), one may adopt a compound view, as Railton (2017, 2018) does to account for desire's rationality. Rationality in desire involves the dynamic interplay between the anticipated value and the value of the outcome of actions. This embraces the spirit of ET.⁴ ET is thus the dominant view. Let us finally turn to caprice.

⁴ Mulligan (2007) argues that the formal object of desire is *ought-to-do*, while that of wishes is *ought-to-be*. This may offer a *sui generis* account of correctness of desire in motivational terms.

3. The Puzzle of Caprice

Let me start with five vignettes that will guide my investigation.

Playground Tantrum – It’s 6 pm. Kevin has been playing in the park for two hours. He had a great time: he went down the slide, played hide and seek, and had fresh lemonade. Now it’s time to go home but Kevin wants to stay in the park. When his father reiterates that they should go, Kevin throws a tantrum and starts to cry and scream. Eventually, they go home and Kevin relishes watching *Luca*.

Korean Obsession – Sally and her friends are planning dinner. Someone suggests going to the pizzeria next door and everyone agrees, except Sally, who wants to go to the Korean restaurant. She knows that the Korean restaurant is not better – both restaurants are equally good – and she likes pizza. But she won’t change her mind: she wants to go to the Korean. They go to the pizzeria; Sally is annoyed.

Thursday: Gelato Day – Sam is working hard on getting tenured but decides to take Thursday evenings off. He is fond of gelato, particularly the pistachio flavour, to the point that he desires to have pistachio gelato every Thursday evening. Not lemon gelato. Not tiramisu. Not to read a nice book. Not to go to the movies. What he wants is pistachio gelato every Thursday evening, period. If friends were to invite him for dinner on Thursday, he would systematically decline the invitation: “I can’t. It’s Thursday, my gelato day”.

Yacht – Mary is nouveau riche. She has a great yacht and often enjoys it with friends. She does not need another yacht. But she cannot help herself: she badly wants another one. She fantasizes about her friends’ reaction when they’ll see the new yacht. “A new yacht, that’s it”, she thinks.

Airport Temptation – Mark is at the airport. He knows it is time to board. On his way to the gate, he notices a stand with delicious looking churros that smell amazing. Mark is tempted: he wants to buy churros. He hesitates: the plane is leaving soon. Still, he decides to buy churros. He just arrives on time to board. Phew!

In all these cases, the person’s desires are unfitting or silly: they are *capricious* desires. The puzzle of caprice consists in explaining why capricious desires are *incorrect*. Let me describe features of capricious desires that will set two *desiderata* for a convincing solution to the puzzle, namely the pejorative characterizations (§3.1) and the ways of escaping caprice (§3.2).

3.1. Characterizations

We do not merely deem capricious desires *incorrect* or *inappropriate*. We often describe them by appealing to more fine-grained pejorative characterizations. Three characterizations are relevant to contrast ET with DT. Capricious desires are typically considered *infantile*, *futile*, and *arbitrary* by external observers. Let me present each characterization in turn.

Infantility is the idea that capricious desires resemble children's caprices. As observed, children are prone to tantrums, the overt manifestation of caprice and of desire frustration (among other affective states). On average, tantrums occur once a day in 18-60 months old children (Potegal & Davidson 2003). In our vignettes, the desires can be characterized as childish or immature. Wanting to have pistachio gelato every Thursday unconditionally, refusing to consider the pizzeria, risking to miss a flight because of gluttony, and wanting an unnecessary new yacht qualify as puerile. We assess capricious subjects as failing to regulate their desires in a mature and reasonable way. This flaw can hinge on emotional expressions (as in tantrums), on failing to delay desire gratification (as in *Airport Temptation*), to accept that desire satisfaction has come to an end (as in *Playground Tantrum*) or that a relevant desire is already satisfied (as in *Yacht*). Children make these mistakes when they behave capriciously; when people have child-like desires, we deem those capricious. One may reply to capricious subjects (maybe with a tone of irritation): "Don't be foolish. Stop acting like a child."

Futility is the idea that capricious desires are futile, frivolous, or superficial, i.e., they are about unimportant things, as in all our vignettes. It's neither important to stay in the park, nor to have churros, nor to go to the Korean tonight, and so on. The blame is axiological: capricious people care about things that are not worth caring about. This captures the greed or snobbery that capricious people may manifest. We could reply to them (with a tone of impatience maybe): "It doesn't matter. It is not important!"

Arbitrariness is the idea that a capricious desire is about a particular state even though other states are equally desirable. The desire is arbitrary: it ascribes a relevant axiological difference where there is none. Capricious desires are often arbitrary. Eating in another restaurant that is as good as the Korean, or going to the movies on Thursday (rather than having gelato) are equally good options. Arbitrariness captures the obstinacy, stubbornness, or inflexibility that is typical to caprice and that elicits puzzlement. Why is the person not willing to consider (and desire) other options? We could tell capricious subjects (with a tone of perplexity maybe): "I don't understand why you want *this*; *that* is just as good."

These three features are typical characterizations and not meant to be necessary and sufficient conditions for caprice's incorrectness. They clearly are insufficient. One may desire to tickle one's partner and behave in a *childish* way; this desire is playful yet not capricious. One may desire something *unimportant*, say to go for a walk with a friend; this is not a caprice either. One may have *arbitrary* desires when faced with two equally nice sofas; this also is not capricious. This reveals that these characterizations are not pejorative *per se*: sometimes there is nothing wrong in having infantile, futile, and arbitrary desires. Yet they are negative in the case of caprice.

Our first *desideratum* is the following: why are capricious desires typically deemed incorrect *qua* infantile, futile, and arbitrary? This particular constellation of blame needs to be explained, and it will appear that ET fails to do so.

3.2. Normative transitions

As de Sousa emphasizes, emotional rationality is a dynamic matter. The second *desideratum* hence concerns ways out of caprice, i.e., strategies that turn capricious desires into correct attitudes. There are various ways of discarding a capricious desire and resigning to its frustration, but six strategies are relevant for my purposes. The first three concern modifications of the *content* of the capricious desire, the others pertain to changes in the *attitude* towards the content of the desire.

First, capricious desires can turn into fitting desires by modifying the temporal features of the state desired. More precisely, it can be correct to desire the same state (or at least the same type of state) if one desires its obtaining *at some point in the future*. In other words, *postponing* the satisfaction of the capricious desire can transmute it into a correct desire. For instance, desiring to go to the Korean restaurant *at some point this year* is no longer capricious, unlike the desire to go there *now*; Kevin's desire to return to the playground tomorrow is fine, etc. Delay gratification plays a role. Call this strategy "*Postpone*".

Second, *generalising* the content of the desire can absolve it. For instance, it is correct to desire to go to *some* good restaurant, whichever that restaurant might be. Desiring to own *a* yacht of good quality or *some* luxury items can be accurate too. Desiring to relax on Thursday evenings in *some way or other* is equally fine. Call this strategy "*Generalize*".

Relatedly, and this is a third strategy, one way to generalize is by keeping the content of the desire fixed and adding a disjunct. Desiring to go to the Korean restaurant *or* the pizzeria is correct. Desiring to stay in the park *or* to go home is correct. Desiring pistachio gelato *or* watching *My Brilliant Friend* is totally fine. These desires about disjunctive content are fitting. Call this strategy "*Disjunct*".

So far, I have focused on modifications of desire's content (regarding time, generality, or disjunction). Other ways out of caprice pertain to modifications of the *attitude* (vs. content). Keeping the content fixed but changing one's attitude towards it can turn the capricious desire into a fitting attitude.

One strategy relies on modifying the strength of the capricious desire and adding another, stronger desire. Desiring *mildly* to go to the Korean restaurant is fine as long as the subject also desires *more strongly* to go to the pizzeria. In this case, the content of the capricious desire is the same; the difference is in the strength of the desire and the addition of a stronger desire. A similar idea can be expressed in terms of *pro toto* and *pro tanto* desire. Desiring *pro tanto* to go to the Korean is correct if the subject also desires *pro toto* to go to the pizzeria. Note that simply modifying the strength of the

capricious desire will not do. Desiring *only mildly* to go to the Korean restaurant makes it less questionable than its strong counterpart. However, the mild desire remains capricious if it is not accompanied by another desire: it is a tiny caprice. If Sally confessed at the pizzeria that she still wanted to go to the Korean, one could reply: “Enough, please.” Call this strategy “*Weaken*”.

A fifth strategy consists in transmuting the desire into a *wish*. It is correct to wish the content of the capricious desire. For instance, it is accurate to wish to stay longer in the playground, to own a new yacht, to have gelato every Thursday, or to have dined at the Korean restaurant. Unlike desires proper, wishes are more idle and utopian; they are related to fantasies and ideal worlds (de Sousa 1998: 127). Their correctness is thus more liberal than that of desire proper. At least, wishes of the kind mentioned are less dubious than the corresponding wants. One could reply to capricious people: “Dream on!”. Call this strategy “*Wish*”.

Lastly, for some capricious desires, suspending desire – neither desiring *p* nor desiring not *p* – and indifference are fitting. When presented with the options of the Korean or Italian restaurant, indifference is correct. Likewise, it is correct to neither want gelato every Thursday nor be averse towards it. This strategy is relevant when options are axiologically equal; suspension is one way to eschew arbitrariness. Call this strategy “*Suspend*”.

These strategies are not exhaustive. Other options pertain to modifications of the context and of the agent’s features. For instance, being alone or in a group, social status, and personal relationships may impact our assessment of desires as capricious. Still, these strategies suffice to set our second *desideratum*. The right solution to the puzzle should explain why capricious desires turn into fitting attitudes in the ways mentioned.

4. Too Good to be Desirable: The Chief Challenge to ET

Let us assume that capricious desires are incorrect.⁵ If ET is true, it follows that capricious desires (*qua* incorrect) are desires about states that are *not* good. Either they are about *bad* states, or they are about *neutral* states. Put differently, capricious desires (*qua* incorrect) cannot be about good states. Is this really so?

ET seems to explain many cases of capricious desires. In *Airport Temptation*, the desire is incorrect because buying churros in the situation is bad: the state desired is prudentially bad (the risks outweigh the hedonic value). Or consider a variant of *Playground Tantrum*: desiring to stay in the park is incorrect if this has bad consequences (e.g., Kevin’s elderly grandparents are already home waiting for dinner). Likewise, the desire in *Korean Obsession* is incorrect if insisting on the Korean ruins the evening. Desiring a new yacht is unfitting if this deprives Mary from necessary goods. In all these cases, the desire is incorrect because its content is bad. So far, so good.

⁵ I focus on correctness. Yet, capricious desires can be incorrect, merely unjustified, or both, like wrong beliefs.

The worry is that some capricious desires are not about bad or neutral states. They are about *good* states or, more to the point, about states that are *too good* to be worth desiring. Revisiting our vignettes reveal that capricious desires remain unfitting in the absence of the negative consequences mentioned.

Consider *Playground Tantrum*. Imagine that playing longer will have no bad consequences. Kevin would simply continue to have fun. Still, after some point, it is time to go. Kevin already had a lot of fun. Desiring to stay in the park remains a caprice in spite of the fact that the state desired would increase goodness. In that respect, this case differs from situations where the addition or conjunction of goodness results in badness (like eating too many candies or eating shrimp with custard). In the case at hand, nothing bad would happen. In fact, this is the problem: the state is *too good* to be worth desiring; it is an axiological glut.

Or consider a variant of *Korean Obsession* where the people would not be upset to eat at the Korean. They would equally enjoy it. It's simply that a decision has been made. This may turn the option of going to the Korean restaurant into a less optimal one, but it hardly makes it *bad* or *neutral*. Although sticking to decisions is preferable, the alternative remains good nonetheless.

Or consider that buying a new yacht would not prevent Mary from enjoying other goods (she is really rich). Still, wanting a second yacht when she already has a perfectly fine yacht *remains* capricious, despite the fact that owning a second yacht would increase value, and hence would be neither bad nor neutral (it would be fabulous!).

Lastly, consider desires about the conjunction of many good states. Every Saturday Matthew wants to take a bath in dim candlelight while drinking champagne, devouring oysters, listening to Vivaldi, enjoying poems recited by friends, and glimpsing at the spectacle of fireworks from his window. What a wonderful object of desire, grandiose to be precise. Still, this desire is capricious or at least highly whimsical.

This is my chief argument against ET. Some desires are incorrect even if their content is good. This can happen in caprice. In fact, this is typical of caprice, and explains why the flaw in caprice is less serious than in other incorrect desires. ET predicts that the objects of capricious desires cannot be good. But they can be good, even fabulous. Conversely, this also reveals that ET fails to capture correct desire: goodness does not suffice to make the desire correct, witness the above examples of caprice. Sometimes surplus of goodness is the culprit.

This argument can be substantiated further by considering the satisfaction of capricious desires. Let us focus on cases where this results in enjoyment, pleasure, or joy. In many cases, these emotions are fitting. Although desiring gelato every Thursday is capricious, enjoying this state is fine, if the gelato is good and this does not bring about negative consequences. Although wanting another yacht is capricious, once Mary has acquired it, being happy about it is apt. It would be capricious to fail to enjoy

it! These emotions accurately reflect goodness. This corroborates the claim that objects of caprice can be good. For the relevant difference between capricious desire and enjoyment concerns actuality: in caprice, as in desire more generally, the state is not represented as actual, while in enjoyment it is represented as actual (Lauria 2017a, 2023).

Still, this argument relies on value calculus, and the rules of the calculus remain to be written. Let us thus discuss ET in light of our *desiderata*.

5. Evaluative Truth: *Desiderata*

5.1. Characterizations

Capricious desires are deemed incorrect *qua* infantile, futile, and arbitrary. If ET is true, it should explain these characterizations in terms of the state desired being not good. It appears that it doesn't have the resources to do so.

Let us start with *Infantility*. Children are typically imprudent. They often desire states that bring pleasure but have bad repercussions, such as eating too many sweets, staying up too late, or skipping school. Infantility can lie in failing to consider long-term consequences; maturity requires avoiding imprudent desires of this kind. When people fail to do so, we deem their capricious desires infantile. However, not all capricious desires are unfitting in this dire way. Independently of the idea that capricious desires need not be about states that bring about bad consequences (§4), it often sounds too harsh to align capricious desires with imprudent childish desires. Many capricious desires are not *seriously* flawed. Their incorrectness notwithstanding, they often resemble innocent and fitting infantile desires, such as the desire to tickle one's partner. Explaining their incorrectness in terms of neutral, let alone bad states turns them into more wicked experiences than they often are. ET's verdict is too extreme. Although capricious desires are incorrect, they are not as remote from correct infantile desires as ET implies. A conception such as DT (§7.1) that captures infantility in a less dramatic way is preferable.

Let us move to *Futility*. As observed, desires are futile when their content is not important, does not add significant value, or is not worth caring about. As futility is defined in axiological terms, ET seems to be in a good position to explain it. However, things are not that simple. ET explains futility as follows: capricious desires are incorrect *qua* futile (their content is not important) because their content is not good but bad or neutral. The question is: how can we move from badness/neutrality to unimportance?

Starting with badness is a non-starter. Clearly, the badness of something does not imply that it doesn't matter. Many bad things, such as rape, matter a lot. Badness does not suffice to explain futility. Furthermore, appealing to badness delivers the wrong order of explanation. In *Airport Temptation*, the badness of buying churros should explain why this state is unimportant. But the reverse is more

intuitive: buying churros is bad partly *because* it is unimportant. In this case, futility explains badness. Yet the task consisted of explaining futility.

It is more plausible to explain futility by neutrality. If a state is neutral, then it is not important. Indeed, what is important has positive or negative value. Neutrality thus implies unimportance. This explains the frivolity of capricious desires when their object is neutral. However, many capricious desires are not about neutral states, yet still qualify as futile. For instance, some capricious desires are about *bad*, not neutral, states (e.g. *Airport Temptation*). Neutrality cannot explain futility in these cases. Moreover, if my chief argument is correct, many capricious desires are futile although their object is *good*. As badness and neutrality fail to explain futility, futility is left unexplained. An explanation such as DT (§7.1) that clearly implies futility will have the upper hand.

Let us close by examining *arbitrariness*. According to a standard definition (Fleming 2014), a desire for p is arbitrary when there is another state q that is at least equal in value in relevant respects, yet the subject fails to desire q. Again, as arbitrariness is defined in axiological terms, one might think that ET easily explains it. However, if one adopts the standard definition of arbitrariness, it is unclear that capricious desires are incorrect for ET. If arbitrariness is defined in terms of two states being equally good, why would it be incorrect to desire only one state in ET, given that it is good? As observed, ET acknowledges the possibility of *correct* arbitrary desires, but the puzzle of caprice consists of explaining *incorrect* arbitrary desire.

More generally, ET collides with the standard definition of arbitrariness in terms of a pair of desires about equally valuable states. Indeed, in ET, capricious desires are incorrect *qua* arbitrary because their content is not good. But what seems to go wrong in many caprices, for instance in *Korean Temptation*, is that two options are equally good, although the subject desires only one of them. At least in some cases, the problem is the goodness of *both* options. Defenders of ET may have the resources to fine-tune their view to account for axiologically equal states. Still, this suffices to shift the burden of proof. An explanation that naturally conforms to the standard definition of arbitrariness would be more elegant (§7.1).

5.2. Normative transitions

Let us now examine how ET explains the normative transitions described earlier (§3.2). Troubles arise here too.

According to ET, *Postpone* (desiring that p obtains later) is adequate because p will be good *only later*. This raises the question: how can a currently neutral or bad state become good in the future? The standard explanation pertains to defeaters. Some defeaters currently in place may cease to hold in the future. Having churros after one has landed is accurate: the defeater is no longer in place. It is also correct to buy a new yacht next year if one will have the money only then. Because defeaters turn the desired state into a negative one, this explanation holds for capricious desires that are about negative

states. But some capricious desires aren't. ET acknowledges the possibility of capricious desires being about neutral states. Does the transition from a presently neutral state to a future good state explain *Postpone*?

Sometimes evaluative features of situations change, and this explains *Postpone*. But in some cases, *Postpone* stands, although the evaluative landscape remains unchanged. Consider that Sam wants gelato. Alas, the pistachio flavour is unavailable. Still, he wants pistachio gelato. *Postpone* holds: it is correct to want to return there and have pistachio gelato in the future. Now, according to ET, having gelato is only good later, whereas having gelato now is neutral or bad. What accounts for this transition? The fact that the pistachio flavour is unavailable does not turn the state into a neutral or bad one. It is not a defeater: it does not undercut or rebut the goodness of the state. Attainability may be a necessary feature of rational choice, yet it does not affect the value of the states desired in such a radical way. Often our desires are fitting, i.e., about good states, even if they are not currently satisfiable. Conversely, the gelato is not made good by the fact that it will be available later. Therefore, the desire isn't capricious in virtue of its content becoming good later. Explanations of *Postpone* that do not involve drastic axiological transitions of this kind – like DT (§7.2) – are more plausible.

Second, whether ET explains *Generalize* is questionable. According to ET, desiring the generic state is correct because it is good, unlike the specific state. This is perplexing. If the specific state is one way to realize the generic good, how could it differ in value? And if it differs in value, how could it be a way to realize the generic good? Consider *Thursday: Gelato Day*. It is fitting to desire to relax on that evening, and having pistachio gelato is one way to do so. If this state is an appropriate way to realize the generic good state (i.e., relaxation), it is unclear that it is bad or neutral. For argument's sake, assume that this state is bad or neutral. Then why would the *generic* state be good if the *specific* state is one appropriate way of realizing it? It is more intuitive to think that the generic and specific states instantiate similar thin value, as in DT (§7.2).

Third, it is unclear that ET adequately accounts for *Disjunct*. ET predicts that only the disjunction is good; disjuncts taken in isolation are not good. As the subject desires one disjunct, the desire is incorrect. However, it is not straightforward that disjunctions can be good independently of the goodness of disjuncts. Consider two cheesecakes that are equally good. How could it be good to have one *or* the other if *each* cheesecake was not good? What makes the disjunction valuable if not the goodness of the disjuncts?

Let us assume that a disjunction is good if at least one disjunct is good. After all, disjunction is true when at least one disjunct is true; the same may hold for goodness. Let us assume that the state desired in *Korean Obsession* is not good. Now, on this proposal, the disjunction < go to the pizzeria or burn the restaurant > is good, because the first conjunct is good. But it is odd to think that the desire for this disjunction would be a way out of caprice, to say the least. This case echoes Ross's paradox and its

difficulties. For my purposes it suffices to say that complications of this sort do not arise if one considers each disjunct as good, as in DT (§7.2).

Fourth, ET explains *Weaken* in terms of the distinction between *pro tanto* and *pro toto* desire. It is correct to capriciously desire *p pro tanto*, when one also desires *q pro toto*, because *p* is *pro tanto* good, whereas *q* is *pro toto* good. However, ET is at pains to explain the same strategy that hinges on the strength of desire. ET rightly predicts that the desire for *q* should be stronger than the desire for *p*: *q* is more valuable than *p*. Now, ET explains this in terms of *q* being good and *p* being bad or neutral. However, this need not be so. True, if *p* is bad or neutral, and if *q* is good, *q* is more valuable than *p*. But *q* is also more valuable than *p* when *p* is good but simply less valuable than *q*. Differences in degrees can hold within positive values. In these cases, the desire for *p* can still be capricious, as when one strongly desires a good cheesecake when a clearly better one is available. An account that captures differences in strength within positive values escapes this pitfall.

Fifth, ET's description of *Wish* is contentious. In ET, wishes and desires have the same correctness conditions, namely goodness. Why would it be appropriate to *wish* the content of a capricious desire then? One may emphasize that wishes are about what is *ideally* good, as opposed to what is good in the *actual* world. Hence, capricious desires are incorrect because their content is merely *ideally* – not actually – good. However, this is perplexing. The state desired is either actually good, actually bad, or actually neutral. Why would it be merely *ideally* good? For argument's sake, assume that it is *actually* bad or neutral. How could it be simultaneously *ideally* good? It is possible that some states (say, biological immortality) are only ideally good, because they are physically impossible and thus cannot be actually good. But it is mysterious to think that actually *bad* or *neutral* possible states *become* good in an ideal world. This switches the burden of proof.

Lastly, ET explains *Suspend* (neither desiring *p* nor desiring not *p*) in terms of the neutrality or badness of both states. Indeed, if both states are not good, it is correct to desire neither. The problem is that it is sometimes correct to suspend desire when two states are *equally* good. As both restaurants are good, suspending desire and indifference is correct. Sticking to the desire for one would be capricious. Suspension of this kind relies on the idea that both options *are* good. Of course, replies are available, yet this is a last challenge.

To summarize, if our piece of value calculus is right, ET does not yield the right prediction. Independently of this argument, it is unclear that ET meets our *desiderata*. Thus, ET does not adequately solve the puzzle. Let us now contrast it with DT.

6. Deontic Truth

Recently, a new conception of desire has been proposed: the deontic view that traces back to Meinong (Lauria 2014, 2017a, 2017b, 2023). In this view, to desire that *p* is to represent *p* as *what ought to be* or, if one prefers, as *what should be*. Desiring to visit the Alhambra is representing this state as what

ought to be. Desires are deontic attitudes. The view relies on ought-to-be norms and on the distinction between mode and content. Let me briefly clarify these two components.

As an alternative to the evaluative conception, the deontic view assumes that ought-to-be differs from goodness. Ought-to-be is a kind of norm, whereas goodness is evaluative. Despite close relations between norms and values, it is reasonable to assume that they differ (Ogien & Tappolet 2009). For instance, one may *explain* the other. Intuitively, p ought to be *because* p is good, i.e., values explain norms. If explanations of this kind are irreflexive, norms differ from values. The deontic view assumes that norms are based on values: a state ought to be *because* it is good. This captures the grain of truth in the evaluative conception of desire. Desires are *based* on positive evaluations: S's desire for p is explained by S's positive evaluation of p – just like norms are explained by values. This assumption will indirectly play a role in my arguments. Note that ought-to-be also differs from ought-to-do or norms about actions.⁶ Consider the norms that it ought to rain, that people shouldn't die of hunger, or that Mary should be happy. Strictly speaking, these norms are about states of affairs – not actions. But let us leave this metaethical issue aside, as it is not relevant for my purposes here.

The deontic conception exploits the distinction between mode and content. Desire involves a deontic *mode*: ought-to-be features in the mode or attitude. To desire that p is to represent p (content) *as what ought to be* (mode). Desires involve the mode or guise of the ought-to-be (Lauria 2017a, Massin 2017). As a deontic attitude, to desire is to “require” a state to obtain, to “care” whether it obtains. Leaving modes aside, what matters here is that ought-to-be is the formal object of desire. Thus, this conception delivers a new, deontic account of desiderative truth (DT):

The desire for p is correct if, and only if, p ought to be;

The desire for p is incorrect if, and only if, it is *not* the case that p ought to be: either p ought *not* to be (wrongness) or p is *not* such that it ought to be (deontic neutrality).

For DT, capricious desires are incorrect because they are about states that are *not* such that they ought to be. Or if one prefers, they are desires about what is not right or not required. They are incorrect because they do not reflect what ought to be.

Let me develop the idea with an intuitive gloss of our vignettes. Sometimes capricious desires are about states that *ought not* to happen (wrong states). In *Airport Temptation*, buying churros *ought not* to happen. The same verdict applies to cases that bring negative consequences (e.g., to keep playing in the park *ought not* to happen when grandparents are waiting; owning a new yacht *ought not* to happen if finances are low, etc.).

⁶ For this reason, my view differs from Mulligan's (2007) and Massin's (2017), who conceive of desire's formal object as ought-to-do or ought in general, respectively.

In other cases, capricious desires are about states that *neither* ought to obtain *nor* ought not to obtain (deontic neutrality). No norm of this kind applies to the object of desire. Because Mary does not need a new yacht, owning a new yacht is not required. Although playing longer in the park would be fantastic, it is not something that *ought* to be; Kevin already had enough fun. In *Korean Obsession*, there is no sense in which the group *ought* to dine at the Korean, even if nothing bad would happen were they to dine there. In *Thursday: Gelato day*, Sam doesn't have to have gelato: this is not something that *ought to be*; many other states are equally desirable. As the desired states are not such that they *ought* to happen, desiring them is incorrect. Desires about deontically neutral states are typical of caprice. This is why the blame is not as harsh as in other kinds of unfitting desires, which clearly are about states that *ought not* to happen. Deontic neutrality is captured by the concept of "superfluous", i.e., what does not make a relevant difference. Superfluous states neither ought to obtain nor ought not to obtain. Superfluity is key to caprice.

DT thus yields intuitive verdicts. Importantly, it avoids the chief objection raised against ET: DT does not imply that the content of capricious desires is bad or neutral. The object of desire is often good; still, it is not something that *ought* to be. DT explains why capricious desires about good states may still be unfitting: some good states – superfluous states – are not such that they ought to be. This verdict articulates the intuition that lies behind the objections to ET. Sometimes highly valuable states are not required and hence not worth desiring. This offers advantages to DT in accounting for our *desiderata*.

7. Deontic Truth: *Desiderata*

7.1. Characterizations

DT illuminates why we deem capricious desires infantile, futile, and arbitrary as follows: the object of desire either ought *not* to happen or is *superfluous*. Let us revisit each characterization.

Capricious desires resemble infantile desires because they are not about states that ought to be. Children often desire states that ought not to happen, like eating too many candies. When people desire too much of good things in an imprudent manner, they typically behave like children. Less dramatically, children often desire things that are superfluous. These things may be good, yet they do not make a significant difference for well-being: they are not such that they *ought to be*. Part of maturity consists of regulating one's desires by refraining from desiring good things that are not required. The mature attitude is to feel content and satisfied with good enough states that ought to be. Wanting more flirts with incorrectness. When people require things that are not required, even when these things are good, we deem them capricious *qua* infantile. We blame them for behaving like children who want unlimited good things and don't tolerate negligible frustrations. Unlike ET, DT does not imply that the content of capricious desire is bad or neutral. Hence, it captures the resemblance between capricious desires and correct infantile desires, while simultaneously delivering different normative verdicts.

It should be clear by now how DT explains futility. Futile desires are about states that are not important, that do not make a significant difference. DT explains them by the fact that the desired states are not such that they ought to be. The move from absence of ought-to-be to unimportance is straightforward. A state is important only if it ought to be. States that are *not* such that they ought to be cannot be important. Absence of ought-to-be norms regarding *p* implies the unimportance of *p*. Thus, capricious desires are incorrect *qua* futile because their object is not such that it ought to be and therefore is not important.⁷ DT avoids the worries of ET, as it does not explain unimportance in terms of bad or axiologically neutral states. Unimportant states can be good or bad. Sometimes the surplus of goodness doesn't make a significant difference; hence the state is not required. DT also captures futility when the desired state is neutral: if a state is axiologically neutral, it cannot be such that it ought to be, since ought-to-be depends on goodness.

Lastly, DT explains arbitrariness as follows. When two states are equally good, none of them in particular ought to be. As ought-to-be is based on goodness, there are good states that are not required to obtain. Ought-to-be is sensitive to relevant differences, which are absent in arbitrary situations. The desired state may be good but is not required to happen, hence desiring only one state is incorrect. Unlike ET, DT clearly conforms to the standard definition of arbitrariness in terms of equally good states.

7.2. Normative transitions

DT offers plausible explanations of the ways of escaping caprice. Norms are dynamic. DT explains *Postpone* as follows: the desired state should happen only later. Going to the Korean restaurant should happen but not now; playing in the park ought to be but not now, etc. As the state ought to take place only later, desiring it to happen now is incorrect, whereas postponing its satisfaction is flawless. Unlike ET, DT does not postulate that currently bad or neutral states become good, which seemed sometimes mysterious. In the pistachio flavour case, the unavailability does not impact the goodness of the state desired. Still, it impacts norms. If ought implies can or possibility, it cannot be that Sam ought to have pistachio gelato, as this is currently not possible. When the flavour is available again, the desire will be correct, but this is not because the state wasn't already good. A normative change happened, but it is not the emergence of goodness.

DT offers the following explanation of *Generalize*: desiring the generic state is accurate because only this state ought to be. Going to *a* restaurant – not the Korean in particular – is right; relaxing ought to happen, but having pistachio gelato is not required. In DT, unlike ET, the generic and

⁷ This is not to say that negative norms cannot be about important things. For instance, it is important *not* to buy churros when one has to board. This is fine for DT: the positive state (buying churros) is not what ought to be, hence is not important, although its negation is.

the specific states instantiate the same thin value. The only difference is that only the generic state ought to be. As norms are based on goodness but differ from it, this is not surprising.

Regarding *Disjunct*, DT appeals to norms about disjunctive states. Sometimes what ought to be is merely a disjunction, not the obtaining of disjuncts in isolation. For instance, Sam ought to relax by *either* having gelato *or* watching a movie *or* dining with friends. This does not imply that he ought to have gelato. If capricious desires are about one disjunct, when only the disjunction ought to be, they are incorrect. Each disjunct is good, although it is not required in isolation.

One may be skeptical of DT's explanation of *Weaken* on the grounds that norms do not admit of degrees. Either p ought to be or p ought not to be; but it is not the case that p ought *more* to be than q. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which norms admit of strength: some norms have priority over others (Ogien & Tappolet 2009). For instance, urgent states should happen prior to non-urgent states. Sometimes, norms defeat others: the norm of consulting a doctor may defeat the norm of going to work. In caprice, it is correct to desire q more than p, because the norm about q takes priority over the norm about p. Desiring only p is wrong because this disregards priority relations. The same idea can be expressed in terms of *pro tanto* and *pro toto* norms. Unlike ET, this proposal is compatible with both states being good and thus with differences of degree in goodness.

DT explains *Wish* in terms of norms holding in ideal worlds. The capricious desire about p is incorrect because p ought to be in an *ideal* world, not the *actual* world. Wishing p is thus correct. What ought to be in ideal circumstances differs from what ought to be in the actual world. For instance, these norms depend on different kinds of possibility. Norms in ideal worlds outstrip the norms of the actual world. A state being actually good can be sufficient for a state being *ideally* required: an ideal world might be a world where all goods ought to be. The content of caprice may be *actually* good; it is simply a state that ought to be only *ideally*.

Lastly, DT explains *Suspend* as follows. If p and q are equally good, suspending desire or indifference is correct because it is not the case that *either* state is required in isolation. As they are equally good, there is no relevant difference. The subject rightly doesn't care because no option in particular ought to be. Perhaps the disjunction of the states ought to be; desiring disjunctively would be fine. Unlike ET, DT clearly acknowledges the rationality of suspending desire when both states are good.

It appears that DT offers the right predictions, explains the characterizations of caprice, and illuminates the ways out of it. Of course, it does not offer a full picture of caprice: DT is an account of the correctness of desire and there are other kinds of incorrect desires beyond caprice. Still, it offers the barebones of a general theory. As ought comes with many flavors, one interesting issue concerns the kind of norm(s) essential to caprice. In previous work (Lauria 2014), I have argued that the relevant source of requirement is well-being, as opposed to morality. I have also delineated capricious desires

from other kinds of desires about superfluous states, like whims or perfectionist desires. It appears that our assessment of desires as capricious focuses on the *good* life, in contrast to the *perfect* life. Here my modest goal was to show that DT offers necessary conditions for caprice's incorrectness and is thus preferable to ET.

Let me close this article by examining one objection. One might think that DT is dubious. If the desired states are good, then they ought to be. It is more promising to appeal to the concept of must. In caprice, the object of desire is not necessary: it is not the case that it *must* be. Indeed, Mary must not have a new yacht, it is not the case that Sam must have pistachio ice-cream, etc. Perhaps capricious subjects confuse their desires with needs. Needs are fitting when their object *must* happen. But it is not the case that the objects of caprice *must* happen. Now, must differs from ought, and defenders of ET may appeal to necessary goods to solve the puzzle.

This proposal explains many cases of caprice. However, it goes too far. Suppose that I desire to go for a walk tonight with a friend. It is not the case that I *must* go; it is not mandatory. Still, the desire is not capricious or even incorrect. DT captures this well: although the promenade is not a state that *must* be, it still *ought* to be. The proposal considered turns many correct desires into capricious ones. Moreover, it is at pains to explain normative transitions. Why would *Postpone*, *Generalize*, or *Disjunct* convert capricious desires into correct ones? Neither going to a restaurant, nor going to the Korean later, nor the relevant disjunction *must* happen. What must happen, if anything is, is simply to eat. Must is too strong; ought-to-be is more suitable.

Conclusion

In this paper I have explored desiderative truth by raising a new puzzle: why are capricious desires incorrect? I argued that the dominant account of desiderative truth in terms of goodness fails to solve the puzzle of caprice because it delivers the wrong verdicts and explains our characterizations and ways out of caprice in problematic ways. Curiously, desires can be unfitting even when their object is good. Sometimes things are *too good* to be desirable. This is a substantial claim given the pedigree of ET. On the bright side, I argued that DT has the resources to disentangle the puzzle of caprice. It offers the right predictions and elegantly captures the characterizations and normative transitions of caprice. Capricious people are too demanding: they care about states that are not required to obtain. Capricious desires do not reflect what ought to be. Thus, desiderative truth is deontic truth. This offers a new argument for the deontic conception of desire.

Incidentally, this article inaugurates a new topic in the moral psychology of emotion. Caprice is part of our normative repertoire. The blame in deeming people capricious is seldom as serious as for immoral desires. Yet, our assessment pertains to failures of appreciating what ought to be for the sake of the good life. Capricious people err in failing to be grateful and content with their current situation

or with a suitable alternative. Caprice questions what is really worth desiring, what qualifies as non-negligible frustration, and the very contours of happiness. This flawed or false desire illustrates how desire aims at reflecting what really matters. I hope that this modest contribution pays tribute to Ronnie's vindication of emotional and desiderative truth.

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