Truly, Madly, Deeply: Moral Beauty and the Self

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Abstract: When are morally good actions beautiful, when indeed they are? In this paper, it is argued that morally good actions are beautiful when they appear to express the deep or true self, and in turn tend to give rise to an emotion which is characterised by feelings of being moved, unity, inspiration, and meaningfulness, *inter alia*. In advancing the case for this claim, it is revealed that there are additional sources of well-formedness in play in the context of moral beauty in addition to those that have tended to be focused on to date: one which is connected to imagining a deep location for the goodness concerned, and another which is connected to imagining that the goodness stems from capacities which are essential to the person.

Keywords: True/Deep Self, Moral Beauty, Experimental Philosophical Aesthetics, Emotions, Reasons, Expression.

§1. Introduction

After years of neglect, the moral beauty theses have been the subject of an increasing amount of attention in recent years (see, e.g., Gaut, 2007; Paris, 2017, 2020; Kidd, 2017; Doran, 2021, 2023, forthcoming 2024a, forthcoming 2024b, forthcoming 2024c; Gill, 2022). In this new work, aestheticians have focused primarily on two main forms of the thesis: one kind which says that someone's morally good internal dispositions—their traits, virtues and character—are beautiful, and another which says that the moral goodness of a person's traits can influence the beauty of their physical appearance (see especially, Doran, 2021, 2023; and Paris, 2017, 2020). Most recently, attention has turned to the question of *why* moral goodness is beautiful, when indeed it is, focusing on the beauty of moral virtues. One prominent answer in this context is that virtues are *formally* beautiful: they are well-formed, in the sense that all the relevant psychological faculties that constitute them work together harmoniously to produce the relevant morally good behaviours they aim at (Paris, 2020).

But are there any other kinds of well-formedness operating in the context of moral beauty, considered more broadly? In this paper, I begin to answer this question by focusing on morally good actions. I argue that one reason that morally good actions are beautiful is that they appear to express the *deep* or *true* self, and in turn tend to give rise to feelings of being moved and of inspiration, *inter alia*. I support this claim with a novel empirical study, along with a replication of this study (total N=1,350), before turning to consider the most salient objection to this claim.

§2. True/Deep Moral Beauty

Imagine the following pair of cases, as vividly as you can:

Akratic Nicola:

Nicola has been raised in a family and community where it is taught that people should be caring. Where she lives, it is thought that acting selfishly is not good or right. Despite her steadfast beliefs, Nicola's emotional inclinations always tend against acting in a caring manner, and her desires always lead her in the direction of acting in a self-centered fashion.

For example, whenever Nicola sees someone in need or in pain, Nicola always feels disdain for them and indifferent to their suffering, and finds that she strongly wants to continue tending to her own needs and interests rather than helping them. In these cases, she makes an effort to ignore her feelings of disdain and indifference, and her desire to focus on herself, and wills herself to act in line with her firm beliefs that it is good and right to be caring, and that she should look out for other people. She is successful in this around 50% of the time.

This was one of the occasions in which her beliefs and will won out over her emotions and desires. Nicola was running late for an important appointment at the bank when she came across a homeless person, named Tom, on the sidewalk. Tom was in a bad way: he was shivering from the cold and clearly hungry. She felt disdain for Tom and indifferent to his suffering, and she wanted to walk on by to make it in time for her important appointment. But in line with her steadfast beliefs that it is good and right to be caring, and that she should look out for others, she tried to overcome these reactions, and willed herself to help Tom, rather than walk on by to make it in time for her appointment. In light of her efforts, her beliefs that she should be caring and look out for others, and her will to help Tom, won out on this occasion.

She reached into her bag and gave Tom the lunch she had packed for herself, and she took off the coat she was wearing and gave this to Tom too. As a result of her action, Nicola didn't make it to the bank in time to be seen, but Tom suffered much less than he would have had Nicola not helped him.

Enkratic Nicola:

Nicola has been raised in a family and community where it is taught that people should not be caring. Where she lives, it is thought that acting selfishly is good and right. Despite her steadfast beliefs, Nicola's emotional inclinations always lead her in the direction of acting in a caring fashion, and her desires always tend against acting in a self-centered manner.

For example, whenever Nicola sees someone in need or in pain, Nicola always feels sympathy for them and distressed by their suffering, and finds that she strongly wants to help them rather than continuing to tend to her own needs and interests. In these cases, she makes an effort to ignore her feelings of sympathy and distress, and her desire to help, and wills herself to act in line with her firm beliefs that it is not good or right to be caring, and that she should just look out for herself. She is successful in this around 50% of the time.

This was one of the occasions in which her emotions and desires won out over her beliefs and will. Nicola was running late for an important appointment at the bank when she came across a homeless person, named Tom, on the sidewalk. Tom was in

a bad way: he was shivering from the cold and clearly hungry. She felt sympathy for Tom and distressed by his suffering, and she wanted to help him. But in line with her steadfast beliefs that it is not good or right to be caring, and that she should only look out for herself, she tried to overcome these reactions, and willed herself to walk on by to make it in time for her appointment, rather than help Tom. Despite her efforts, her emotional reactions of sympathy and distress, and her desire to help Tom, won out on this occasion.

She reached into her bag and gave Tom the lunch she had packed for herself, and she took off the coat she was wearing and gave this to Tom too. As a result of her action, Nicola didn't make it to the bank in time to be seen, but Tom suffered much less than he would have had Nicola not helped him.

Whose action, in helping the homeless person Tom, will tend to be seen as more beautiful? A few considerations might suggest that their actions will be seen as *equally* beautiful. For one thing, the outcome of the actions is identical in both cases. For another, their actions express the same amount of harmony between their psychological capacities in leading them to do the right thing (with each Nicola's will and beliefs opposing their desires and emotional dispositions). Moreover, the constellations of morally good capacities that each Nicola expresses in acting are equally strong, given that each Nicola is equally likely to help on any given occasion.

Alongside this, there are other considerations that might suggest that the *Encratic* Nicola's action will be more likely to be seen as beautiful: unlike the Akratic Nicola, the Encratic Nicola chooses to do the right thing for the right reasons, and moreover, has to overcome the hand of affective dispositions and desires she was dealt by nature in order to do this; and she seems admirable to this extent.

And yet, I suggest that, intuitively, the Akratic Nicola's action will tend to be seen as more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action. If that's right, then what might explain what this?

To see why the Akratic Nicola's action will tend to be seen as more beautiful, it is important to, first, understand how we will tend to think about the Akratic Nicola's action, in contrast to the Enkratic Nicola's action, and, second, how this difference will impact on how we tend to feel about the two actions. Let me take each in turn.

Among all of the characteristics of a person—the way they look, and their memories, skills, preferences, desires, and beliefs—we tend to think that some of these characteristics make up a *deep* or *true self*, and that others lie outside of this. When asked to consider whether someone is the same person after undergoing psychological changes—in their memories, preferences, desires, beliefs, and personalities—we tend to think that changes in morally-relevant capacities have the largest effect on whether a person is the same person as they were before the changes took place (Prinz & Nichols, 2016; Heiphetz, Strohminger & Young, 2017; Molouki & Bartels, 2017). That is, we tend to think that people's true or deep self is constituted, at least in large measure, by their moral capacities. Furthermore, this true or deep self tends to not only be seen as merely moral (in some way), but as morally *good*. When people morally improve, we tend to be less likely to judge them to be different people from who they were before than when people morally deteriorate (Molouki & Bartels, 2017; Tobia, 2016). To wit, we tend to conceive of people as being deeply and truly morally *good*, and regard moral improvements as discoveries of this deep and true self; and, conversely, tend to regard moral deteriorations as reflecting a superficial self that is covering up the deep and true self, at least in cases where we don't consider such people to have become different people altogether (Newman, Knobe & Bloom, 2014).

In addition to being more likely to think that someone's true and deep self is morally good, there is some evidence that we tend to be especially likely to regard a moral capacity as reflecting a person's true and deep self when this stems from their "hotter" psychological capacities (such as people's emotions and desires) rather than their "colder" psychological capacities (such as their

beliefs). Newman, Bloom and Knobe (2014), for example, found that feelings (of either homosexual attraction or negative feelings about homosexuality) were found to be somewhat more indicative of the true self than analogous beliefs (of either homosexuality being permissible or impermissible).[1]

With the foregoing in mind, I want to suggest that while we will tend to think that the actions of both the Enkratic and Akratic Nicola will appear to express their true or deep selves, since their actions are morally good and we tend to assume that the deep or true self is morally good, the Akratic Nicola's action is *more likely* to be regarded as expressing her true or deep self, since her action's moral goodness stems from her 'hotter' psychological capacities.

In connection with this, I also want to propose that this difference will tend to make us feel a different way about the action that each Nicola commits. In expressing a goodness that is deeper and truer to who she is through her actions, a goodness that shines through her actions, and apprehending it as such, the Akratic Nicola's action will tend to give rise to feelings of being moved and of harmony or unity with the Akratic Nicola, as well as a sense of inspiration and meaningfulness, howsoever mildly. Indeed, Doran (2023) has suggested that these feelings, among others, are characteristic of a special emotion which is typically felt in response to beauty (at least of some kinds), and which he labels 'ecstasy,' and has provided evidence of this in the context of natural and moral beauty (Doran, 2022; 2023).[2]

Putting these two aspects together, we can see, I suggest, why the Akratic Nicola's action is more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action, and arrive at one important reason why moral actions are beautiful, when indeed they are: the additional beauty in the Akratic Nicola's action relative to the Enkratic Nicola's action lies in the fact that it appears to express her deep or true self to a greater extent, and in turn tends to give rise to the emotion ecstasy to a greater extent.

From this, we might propose the following moral beauty thesis:

> *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*: if a person, P1, performs an action, A, and A appears to a person, P2, to express P1's deep or true self to a greater extent and in turn gives rise to greater ecstasy in P2 (in standard conditions), then, *ceteris paribus*, A will be more beautiful to P2 to that extent.

More detailed consideration of this claim can help us to understand the varieties of well-formedness that are operational within the domain of moral beauty. Furthermore, seeing that this beauty lies in a kind of well-formedness can also help to explain why morally *bad* actions that express the deep or true self are not typically seen as beautiful.

One prominent variety of well-formedness is discussed in the context of functional beauty. If something's parts make it well-suited to achieving its proper function, then it is well-formed, and beautiful, at least to that extent (see e.g. Xenophon, c. 370/2005; Plato, c. 370/1875; Parsons & Carlson, 2008; Paris, 2020; Paris, 2023). Cheetahs are well-formed to achieve their proper functions of catching prey in, for example, having spots (allowing them to be camouflaged in the

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[1] The deep or true self may not only be the moral self. Fingerhut et al. (2021) found that people's aesthetic preferences also play an important role in determining the deep or true self. In this paper, I suggest that the *moral* deep/true self (though perhaps not the aesthetic preference that constitute the *aesthetic* deep/true self) may itself be a source of beauty. Thanks to a reviewer for this journal for encouraging me to think about this.

[2] As evidenced by Doran (2023), there tends to be a symmetry between the features of objects that lead to the ecstasy response and the response itself (suggesting that we feel into this kind of beauty). The ecstatic response to beauty seems to involve a sense of depth, meaningfulness, unity, of being moved, and insight. Each of these senses involves the idea of a deep location and truth, either in the object of the emotion itself, or in the person that is experiencing this sense: a sense of unity and of being moved, for example, involves feeling affected deeply, and of moving closer to the object of this feeling, and especially to what it is at its core; and a sense of insight, profundity and meaningfulness, for example, often involves the idea of having penetrated, or gone beyond, the object of this sense's surface, to apprehend its true nature or significance. As such, it is plausible that if a moral action is perceived to be expressive of the deep or true self to a greater extent, then it will tend to evoke ecstasy to a greater degree when apprehended as such (howsoever mildly).

plains of Africa), and an elongated spine and long legs (giving them a wide stride), and are beautiful as a consequence.

In these contexts, well-formedness can be a matter of *degree*—where well-formedness is proportional to the *extent* to which the constellation of something's parts causes the achievement of its ends (or proper functions). If evolution by natural selection were to develop traits sequentially, then the addition of longer legs to the cheetah's already elongated spine, would make it more fit to achieve its proper function of hunting gazelles, and therefore more beautiful. Alternatively, well-formedness can be a matter of *manner in the sense of economy of means*—where well-formedness is proportional to the *efficiency* of the constellation of something's parts in causing the achievement of some end (or proper function). Evolution by natural selection has ensured that features that do not earn their keep, and do so efficiently, are selected against. Growing and maintaining tissue, for example, is *costly*, and so the cheetah has evolved to have a long tail and semi-intractable claws for balance, rather than additional training-wheel limbs, for example. The cheetah is, quite literally, a lean, mean, gazelle-chasing machine.

These understandings of the determinates of well-formedness have played an important role in recent attempts to explain moral beauty. In the context of explaining the beauty of internal dispositions such as virtues, Paris (2020) has suggested that virtues are well-formed and, as a result, beautiful, when the parts of a person that make up the virtue (for example, the relevant beliefs, desires, and emotional inclinations) work together to cause the achievement of the proper function of the virtue, and please as such (we return to this additional condition below). A person has a well-formed virtue of compassion if the relevant psychological faculties work together to lead them to achieve the proper end of compassion—namely to act compassionately—and this is beautiful because the relevant psychological faculties *work together* to achieve this end and please as such. Moreover, on this view, a person who has a *more* well-formed virtue of compassion, insofar as their psychological capacities work together to bring about compassionate actions to a greater degree, or more efficiently so, and pleases as such, would have a more beautiful virtue of compassion.[3]

With this in mind, one might wonder whether the difference in beauty between the two Nicola's actions could be accommodated in terms of the way well-formedness has been understood to date in the context of moral beauty?

If well-formedness is to be understood in only these ways, then it might not appear that it can, as I previewed above. In both the case of the Akratic and Enkratic Nicola, the constellation of their moral psychological constitutions cause the achievement of the end of acting compassionately to the same *degree*, insofar as the resulting action is the same for each of them, and the probability of this action occurring is the same in each case—on any given occasion, each has a 50% chance of doing the good thing. That is to say, they are both equally well-formed in the sense of degree that has been targeted to date. Moreover, the constellation of their moral psychological capacities looks to be equally efficient, insofar as the 50% chance of doing good is the result of the functioning of the same number of psychological components, against the resistance put up by the same number of components. In the case of the Akratic Nicola, her desire and emotional reactions are pulling her in the direction of helping the homeless man Tom, opposed by her beliefs and will; and in the case of the Enkratic Nicola, her beliefs and will are pulling in the direction of helping Tom, opposed by her desire and emotional reactions. That is to

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[3] Well-formedness also plays an important role in Schiller's account of moral beauty. Schiller (1793/2003, 1793/2005) proposes that morally good actions are beautiful just when an individual is well-formed in the sense that the person is perfectly internally harmonious—that is, all of their faculties (their beliefs, desires, emotional inclinations, etc.) are working together to lead them to do the morally good thing. Since neither the Akratic nor the Enkratic Nicola is perfectly internally harmonious—far from it—Schiller's account will not be of use here (see, Doran, forthcoming 2024b, for a discussion of Schiller's account).

say, both look to be equally well-formed in the sense of efficiency.[4] And yet, I have suggested that the Akratic Nicola's action will tend to be seen as more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action.

Nonetheless, these understandings of well-formedness help to reveal why it is important that *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty* is formulated as a *ceteris paribus* claim. The perceived expression of a deeper or truer self in acting in a morally good way may be thought to only be able to contribute to the beauty of the actions concerned to the extent that they might be thought to bring with them another feature—namely, causal potency—that might contribute to well-formedness in these other senses.

To see this, it is helpful to consider that psychological essences—as the true or deep self is thought to be—have been shown to tend to be thought to be immutable (that is, they cannot be changed), innate (that is, they have a biological origin, rather than being acquired), and informative (that is, they have broad ramifications, influencing a person's behaviour in a wide variety of situations) (Haslam et al., 2004; Christy, Schlegel & Cimpian, 2019). Many of these features are redolent of causal potency: psychological essences cannot be changed at will and will permeate all aspects of our being to influence our behaviour in a consistent manner across a wide variety of situations, in many such cases (presumably) overcoming competing causes—environmental and internal—to manifest themselves. As such, morally good actions that are thought to express our deep or true selves to a greater extent might be thought to be more beautiful in part because they are expressive of well-formedness in the sense of *degree* that has been pointed to in the literature to date. It may be thought that the nexus of traits that the actions express happen to be more causally efficacious in tending to lead to morally good behaviours, and in turn achieve morally good ends, more regularly, reliably, and in a wider variety of circumstances.

With this in mind, and focusing on the contrast of the Enkratic and Akratic Nicola, while Akratic Nicola's action may seem to be more beautiful because it appears to express her deep or true self to a greater extent in itself and in turn tend to move us to ecstasy to a greater extent, it may only in fact do so because it may be thought that the Akratic Nicola is *more likely* to perform the morally good action (even if the two Nicolas are in fact as likely to perform the action on any given occasion). That is to say, the Akratic Nicola's action may only be more beautiful because, in appearing to express her deep or true self to a greater extent, it is thought to be well-formed to a greater extent in one of the more obvious senses discussed above.

While there is surely merit in this, if we take seriously the idea that the Akratic and Enkratic Nicola are as likely as one another to do the good thing, or if we were to correct for any deviation from this idea, then it would still seem to be the case that the fact that the Akratic Nicola will tend to be perceived to express her *deep* or *true* self in helping will contribute to her action's superior amount of beauty in themselves in this context. That is to say, being expressive of depth and truth might be able to contribute conceptually distinct kinds of well-formedness to a morally good action. For this reason, *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty* needs to be formulated as a *ceteris paribus* claim in order to home in on the ways that appearing to express the deep or true self can contribute to the beauty of morally good actions above and beyond leading to well-formedness in the senses that have been targeted to date.[5]

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[4] Indeed, to the extent that the proper end of an action is to be understood in terms of the agent's intention, then the Enkratic Nicola's action, but not the Akratic Nicola's action, is a successful action, and so might be said to be more well-formed in this sense.

[5] One might have worries about the individuation of mental capacities in these cases. For example, when we read about the Akratic and Enkratic Nicolas, we may imaginatively *flesh out* their capacities in a way which is consistent with the information given, in the same way as we flesh out films beyond what is literally shown in each scene to build a coherent narrative. Perhaps worse still, it might be suggested that, in imagining the two Nicolas, we may individuate the mental capacities in a different manner from how they are described—perhaps thinking of emotions as involving desires and beliefs, for example, or collapsing across the capacities stated where they seem to perform a similar enough function. On this basis, it may be suggested that the two individuals will in fact be thought to differ in terms of their well-formedness in the sense of degree or efficiency, and that this might be responsible for any differences in the beauty of their actions. Another worry is that the motivational force of these capacities may be conceptualised

If the foregoing is right, then how should these additional sources of well-formedness be understood, exactly? With respect to depth, when a morally good action appears to express a person's *deep* self to a greater extent, then the action is well-formed, at least in part, insofar as it appears to express a self—and, more specifically, the goodness which plays an important role in constituting this self—that is located deeper inside the person somehow. That is to say, well-formedness needs to be understood in this context, in part, in terms of the structural property of *manner in the sense of the location* of the good self that the action appears to express in the context of moral beauty. The Akratic Nicola's action expresses that her goodness is deeper.

With respect to truth, when a morally good action appears to express who someone *truly* is, then the action is well-formed insofar as it appears to express that they are essentially good (rather than merely contingently so). Connectedly, they express what we take to be the essence of being human—recent evidence suggests that HUMAN is a dual-character concept, and that the normative sense of HUMAN, and arguably their essence (Newman & Knobe, 2019), is primarily constituted by being morally good (Phillips, 2022). The Akratic Nicola's action expresses that she is *essentially good*, and indeed, essentially human.

Indeed, the idea that there is a link, and even a constitutive link, between beauty and truth has been prominent in the history of aesthetics. It has been suggested, for example, that beautiful things reveal universal truths, particularly related to morality, and connectedly, that beauty is found in things that most closely correspond, or manifest, the general form of things, rather than the form of particular individuals (for a summary of such views see Carritt, 1932: 17-36; see also Lamarque, 2014, Ch. 7, for discussions of notions of truth relative to aesthetics). And with special relevance to *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*, some romantic theories of beauty—such as Croce's (1909/1922)—claim that beauty is true self-expression, and focus particularly on the expression of the "hotter" psychological capacities, such as the desires and passions. Further discussion of the nature of these kinds of well-formedness is provided in §4, where I discuss the most important objection to *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*.

With the foregoing in mind, then, the contrast of the Akratic and Enkratic Nicola, in conjunction with *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*, can help us to see that there are different varieties of well-formedness in operation in the domain of moral beauty.

Finally, it is worth discussing whether expression of the deep or true self will always be beautiful, irrespective of the moral quality of the deep or true self expressed. For, although people tend to think that the deep/true self is morally good, this may not always be the case. The action of someone who tends to treat non-white people immorally—in, for example, spontaneously spitting at non-white people in the street—because they believe that non-white people are inferior and not worthy of care or dignified treatment, and desires ill for them, plausibly expresses a *morally bad* deep/true self. Indeed, recent evidence provided by Daigle and Demaree-Cotton (2022) suggests that just as much is true in precisely the case of a racist person with this psychological profile. But such a person's action would hardly seem beautiful to that extent, at least to people who are not racist themselves.[6]

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differently: it may be thought by some, for example, that beliefs (even moral beliefs) do not have any motivational potency, and that this may have consequences for the well-formedness (*qua* degree or efficiency) of the individuals. Additionally, it may be thought that some of capacities contrasted do not push and pull against doing the right thing to the same degree: for example, the Akratic Nicola feels both sympathy and distress in suffering, where both may be thought to drive in the direction of helping; whereas the Enkratic Nicola feels disdain and indifference to suffering, where the lattermost feeling may merely be understood in terms of a kind of uninterestedness, rather than as a motivation that drives against helping. While there is some force to these worries, they are blunted by the fact that the descriptions are already well-fleshed out, deploy a wide range of folk psychological categories, and describe both Nicolas as being as likely to do the right thing as one another.

[6] Some, however, might disagree. Doran (forthcoming) has suggested that, even in the case of well-formed vices—as evinced by the perfectly formed egoist—there might yet be a beauty, though one that is difficult (or even immoral) to appreciate. Moreover, Julia Peters (2014) has recently argued that Hegel holds a conception of beauty according to which someone is beautiful in any case—including immoral cases—where someone is whole-hearted in their pursuit

In this case, since the value that is deep inside the person and constitutes their essence is morally repugnant, actions expressing this will not readily lead to feelings of ecstasy, and so will not, according to *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*, tend to be seen as beautiful. Indeed, this is a feature of the beauty that lies in well-formedness generally.

For, generally, and as noted by recent supporters of functional beauty in both the moral and non-moral domain (and as I previewed above), well-formedness does not seem to be sufficient for beauty by itself. Paris (2020), for example, notes that certain objects are well-formed for their function, but aren't readily described as beautiful. The heretics fork—which consists of a collar with a sharp double-pronged fork attached, with one prong sitting under the chin and the other resting against the chest—seems perfectly formed for its function of inflicting maximal pain and symbolically condemning heresy. If the victim opens their mouth to speak (further heresies), then will be stabbed under the chin, and as they tire and their head lolls, they will be stabbed under the chin and in the chest (just above their heart). But, the heretic's fork would not be readily regarded as beautiful to that extent. For this reason, accounts of well-formedness have been modified to be conjunctive—in requiring well-formedness *as well as a pleasure* taken in the well-formedness (see Paris, 2020).

The same is true in the case of the kinds of well-formedness picked out by *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*. In this context at least, the primary pleasant state that tends to be felt is ecstasy, and only people who are deeply and truly morally good, and not people who are deeply and truly morally bad, will tend to give rise to this state.[7] [8]

§3. Providing evidence of Deep/True-Moral-Beauty

Rather than relying on my intuitions about *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*, and of the supposed difference in the beauty of the Akratic and Enkratic Nicolas' actions and the reasons suggested for this, we can be more confident of this case by drawing on the judgements of a large number of people, provided that they are competent users of the relevant concepts, possess the requisite imaginative capacities, and are not labouring under an impediment. Indeed, many previous contributions to this debate have favoured such methods—including Doran (2021, 2023) and Paris (2017). To this end, two experimental philosophy studies were conducted—an exploratory study, followed by a pre-registered replication. Ethical approval for the studies was granted by [redacted for anonymity].

§3.i. Study 1

Materials & Method: In a between-subjects design, participants were asked to read about either the Akratic or Enkratic Nicola, imagine the situation described as vividly as possible, and then answer a series of questions. Participants were first asked to indicate the chance that they believe Nicola would help on any given occasion when someone needed caring for ("On any given occasion when Nicola encounters someone who needs caring for, what chance do you think there is that she'd

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of what they freely choose. For example, Peters notes that, for Hegel, even Macbeth is morally beautiful, at least in the second act of the play, where he fully embraces evil (rather than relying on encouragement from his wife).

[7] Interestingly, on the kind of well-formedness that lies in expressing the true self, an additional response may be available in these cases. To the extent that such well-formedness contributes to beauty insofar as it expresses what is thought to be essential to being a human, even bad actions that express who someone truly is as an individual will tend not to be thought to well-formed, and as a consequence, not beautiful. For people tend to think that the telos of humans is to be morally good, rather than bad. As such, the essentially bad person may express who *they* truly are, but who they truly are will not tend to be thought to achieve the proper end of humans, as specified by its essence.

[8] A reviewer for this journal helpfully points out that the case of the Akratic Nicola is like the cases of "inverse akrasia" that are discussed by Arpaly and Shroeder (1999). They argue that agents are *worthy of praise* to the extent that their action issues from psychological factors that are "well-integrated" in the sense of being deep and powerful. This notion of "well-integratedness" seems to be similar to the notion of well-formedness in the sense of degree related to causal potency. Here, by contrast, we are concerned with what makes an action *beautiful*, and it is proposed that being well-formed in senses that are distinct from this kind of well-formedness as *degree* can contribute to an action's beauty.

help?"). This was measured on a sliding scale that ranged from 1 to 100, where 1 was indicated to mean "No chance she'll help," and 100 was indicated to mean "Completely certain she'll help." The precise number the participant moved the slider to was not indicated to participants, in order to help ascertain their true estimation of how likely Nicola would be to help, and therefore how well-formed she is in the senses related to causal potency, free from any demand they might feel to strictly report what they were told in the vignette. Participants were then asked to indicate the extent to which they approved of Nicola's action (as measured by agreement with the statement "I approve of what Nichola did in this case," on a scale anchored from "-4 – Strongly disagree" to "4—Strongly agree," with "0 – Neither agree nor disagree" as the midpoint), to give participants an outlet for any pragmatic pressure they may feel to want to encourage Nicola's action, in line with previous experimental work on moral beauty (e.g. Doran, 2021, 2023, see also, Doran, Forthcoming). Participants were then asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements, on scales anchored from "-4 – Strongly disagree" to "4 – Strongly agree," with "0 – Neither agree nor disagree" as the midpoint: "Nicola's action appears to express who she *truly* is *deep down*," "Nicola's actions makes me feel moved or touched," "Nicola's action makes me feel a sense of oneness or unity with her," "Nicola's action makes me feel a sense of insight or inspiration," "Nicola's action makes me feel a sense of meaningfulness or profundity," "Nicola acted in a beautiful way in this situation." The feeling items were adapted from existing measures of ecstasy (e.g. Doran, 2022; 2023, which in turn draws on work on similar constructs by e.g. Diessner et al., 2008; Zickfeld et al., 2018, 2020; Cova & Deonna, 2014; and Landis et al. 2008), and appeared in a random order between the item measuring judgements of the true and deep self and the item measuring judgements of beauty.[9]

Results: A gender-balanced sample of 675 participants from across the United States was obtained on Prolific, with a view to arriving at a sample size of around 500 after exclusions for failing the attention checks. For a justification of the sample size, please see the *Supplementary Materials*. A final sample of 548 participants was obtained after exclusions (49.3% Women, 49.3 % Men, 1.5% Other, Mean age = 42.93 (SD = 14.25)). The pattern of results is the same with and without exclusions, and the analyses with all participants are reported in the *Supplementary Materials*.

Results (a), reliability and confirmatory factor analyses: Reliability analyses and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to help determine whether the feeling items indeed measured a single construct, as expected. The set of items had a Cronbach's alpha of .93, indicating that the items had excellent consistency (i.e. if someone scored one item highly, they were likely to score the other items highly too). Goodness-of-fit measures that are not overly sensitive to large sample sizes (such as was the case for this study), such as the Comparative Fit Index (.995) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (.011), indicated that a one-factor structure fitted the data well (further goodness-of-fit indicators are reported in the *Supplementary Materials*). On this basis, an overall ecstasy scale was calculated by taking the average of the ecstasy items.

Results (b), main analyses: Examination of the distributions, kurtosis and skewness statistics by condition, and conducting non-parametric Levene's tests of homogeneity of variance, indicated that some of the measures of interest were not normally distributed and had non-homogeneity of variance. For this reason, independent samples t-tests were conducted with bias accelerated bootstrapping (see e.g. Wilcox, 2017). In these tests, the means and standard deviations remain the same, but the estimates of the standard error and confidence intervals change, and tend to be more accurate (though the results are the same with ordinary independent samples t-tests).

Participants judged that the Akratic Nicola was slightly more likely to help on any given occasion that someone is in need (Enkratic Nicola Mean=52.6 (SD=14.30), Akratic Nicola

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[9] Since *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty* is a disjunct—specifying, in part, that if an action appears to express the true self *or* the deep self, then it will be beautiful—and since appearing to express the true self is both logically distinct from appearing to express the deep self, then one might wonder why these haven't been pulled apart in the measures in the experimental design. The reason for this is that, while they are conceptually distinct, they are likely to be so tightly correlated that to include them separately would likely run the risk of introducing problematic levels multicollinearity.

Mean=55.58 (SD=17.29), $t(523.06)$=-2.21, p<.05, Cohen's d=-.19, Pearson's r = .10, small effect size according to Cohen's (1988) rule of thumb of a Cohen's d of .2 for small effect sizes; and small effect size according to Ozer and Funder's (2019) rule of thumb of r of .10 for small effects; see Graphs 1 and 2.). Participants also approved of Akratic Nicola's actions more than the Enkratic Nicola's action (Enkratic Nicola Mean = 2.94 (SD=1.63), Akratic Nicola Mean= 3.20 (SD=1.28), $t(521.94)$=-2.02, p<.05, Cohen's d=-.18, Pearson's r= .09, small effect size according Cohen's (1988) rule of thumb of a Cohen's d of .2 for small effect sizes, and very small to small effect size according to Ozer and Funder's (2019) rule of thumb of r of .05 for very small effects and .10 for small effects; see Graphs 3 and 4).

Participants judged the Akratic Nicola's action to appear to express her true/deep self to a much greater extent than they judged the Enkratic Nicola's action to appear to express her true/deep self (Mean for Enkratic Nicola=.56 (SD=2.27); Akratic Nicola=3.38 (1.13), $t(406.46)$=-18.03, p<.001, Cohen's d=-1.57, Pearson's r= .62, large effect size according to Cohen's (1988) rule of thumb of a Cohen's d of .8 or greater for large effect sizes, and very large effect size according to Ozer and Funder's (2019) rule of thumb of r of .40 or greater for very large effects; see Graphs 3 and 4). Participants also judged the Akratic Nicola's action to be more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action (Enkratic Nicola=2.54 (1.72), Akratic Nicola=3.02 (1.31), $t(514.24)$=-3.62, p<.001, Cohen's d=-.31, Pearson's r = .15, small effect size according to Cohen's (1988) rule of thumb of a Cohen's d of .2 for small effect sizes, and small to medium sized effect according to Ozer and Funder's (2019) rule of thumb of r of .10 for small effects and .20 for medium effect sizes; see Graphs 3 and 4) and to feel more ecstasy in response to the Akratic Nicola's action (Enkratic Nicola=1.17 (1.81), Akratic Nicola= 2.09 (1.74), $t(546)$=-5.96, p<.001, Cohen's d=-.52, Pearson's r= .25, medium effect size according to Cohen's (1988) rule of thumb of a Cohen's d of .5 for medium effect sizes, and medium to large effect size according to Ozer and Funder's (2019) rule of thumb of r of .20 for medium effects and .30 for large effect sizes; see Graphs 3 and 4).
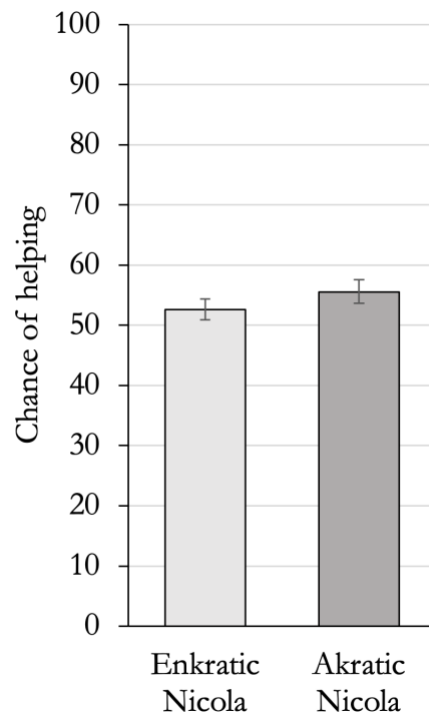

Graph 1. Graph showing judgements of each Nicola's chance of helping on any given occasion, where "1" is "No chance she'll help," and 100 is "Completely certain she'll help," and error bars indicate accelerated bias corrected 95% confidence intervals
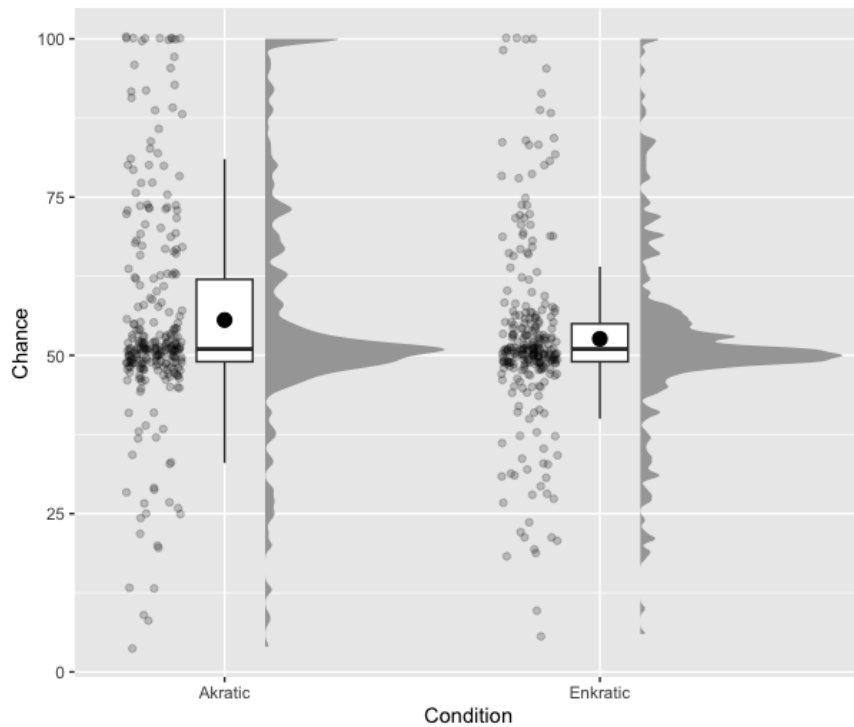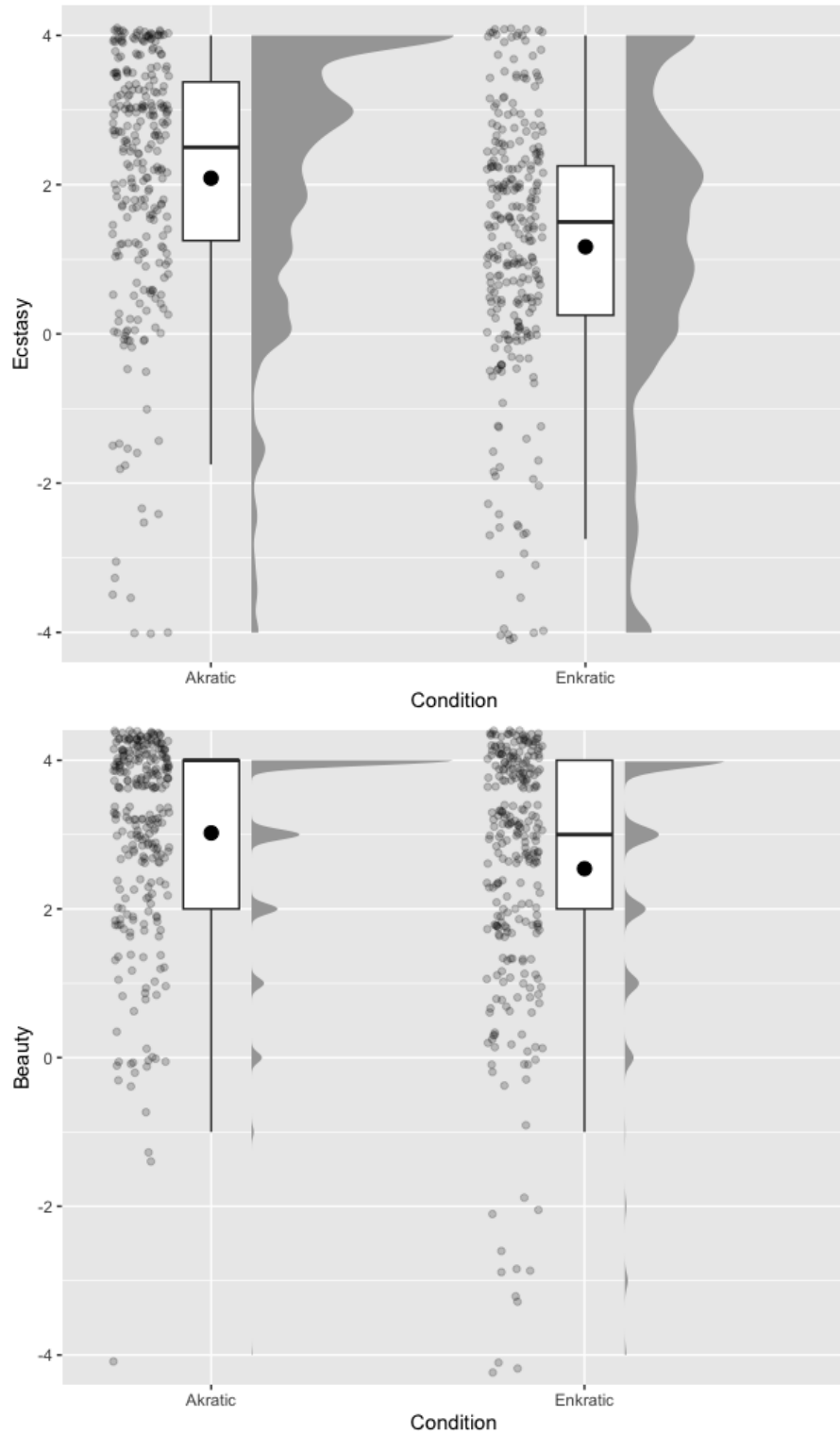
Graph 2. Rainplot showing distributions of judgements of each Nicola's chance of helping on any given occasion, where "1" is "No chance she'll help," and 100 is "Completely certain she'll help," and where the lines bisecting the box and whisker plot is the median value, and the dot is the mean value
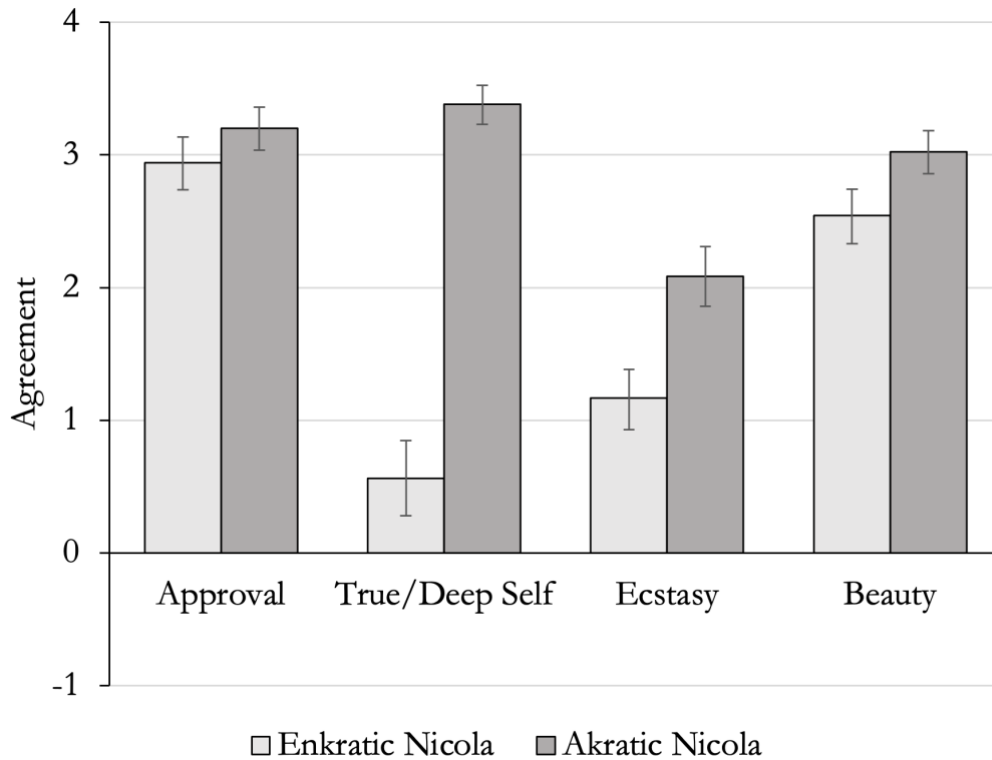
Graph 2. Graph showing agreement with judgements of appearing to express the true/deep self, of feeling ecstasy, and of beauty, where 4 is "Strongly agree," -4 is "Strongly disagree," and 0 "Neither agree nor disagree" and error bars indicate accelerated bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals
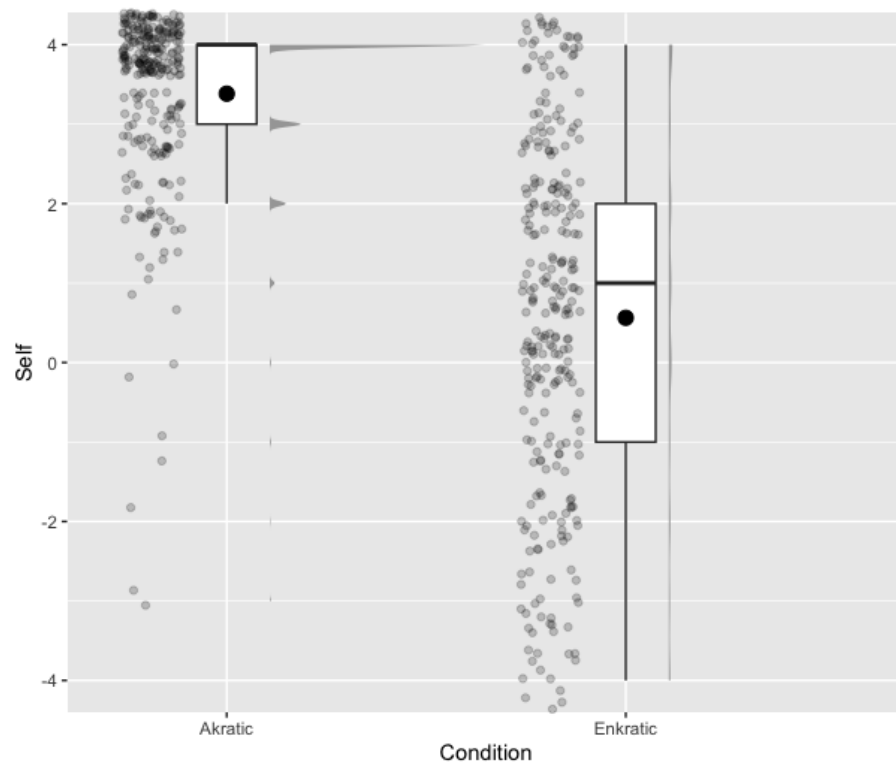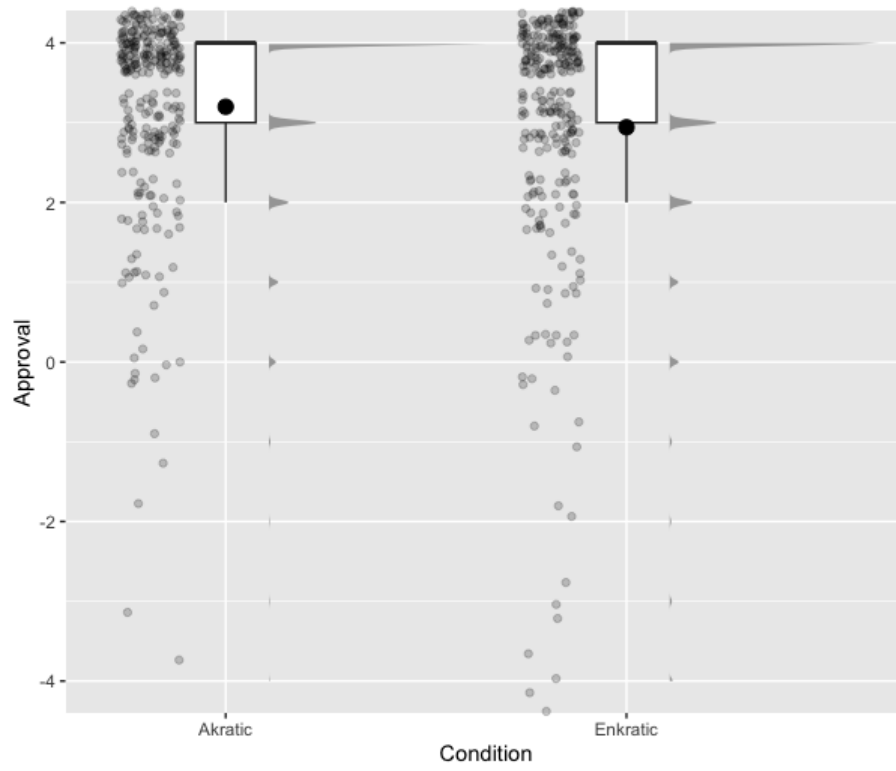
Graphs 4. Rainplots showing distributions of agreement with judgements of approval of action, appearing to express the true/deep self, of feeling ecstasy, and of beauty; anchored at "4 – Strongly agree," and "-4 – Strongly disagree," with the midpoint as "0 – Neither agree nor disagree," and where the line bisecting the whisker plot is the median value, and the dot is the mean value

Results (c), mediation analysis: To help assess whether judgements of the beauty of the action are influenced by judgements of appearing to express the true/deep self, and feelings of ecstasy in

turn, a multiple mediation analysis using ordinary least squares path analysis (Hayes, 2017) was conducted (see Figure 1). Since the Akratic Nicola was judged to be more likely to help on any given occasion—and so may be thought to be more well-formed in the senses of degree and efficiency discussed in the literature to date—differences in judgements of well-formedness in these senses were statistically controlled for by entering judgements of Nicola's chance of helping as a covariate. There was a significant indirect effect which is consistent with the idea that the Akratic Nicola's action was found to be more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action to the extent that the Akratic Nicola's action was found to appear to express the true/deep self to a greater extent, and gave rise to greater feelings of ecstasy in turn (.68, 95% CI [.52, .84]).[10]
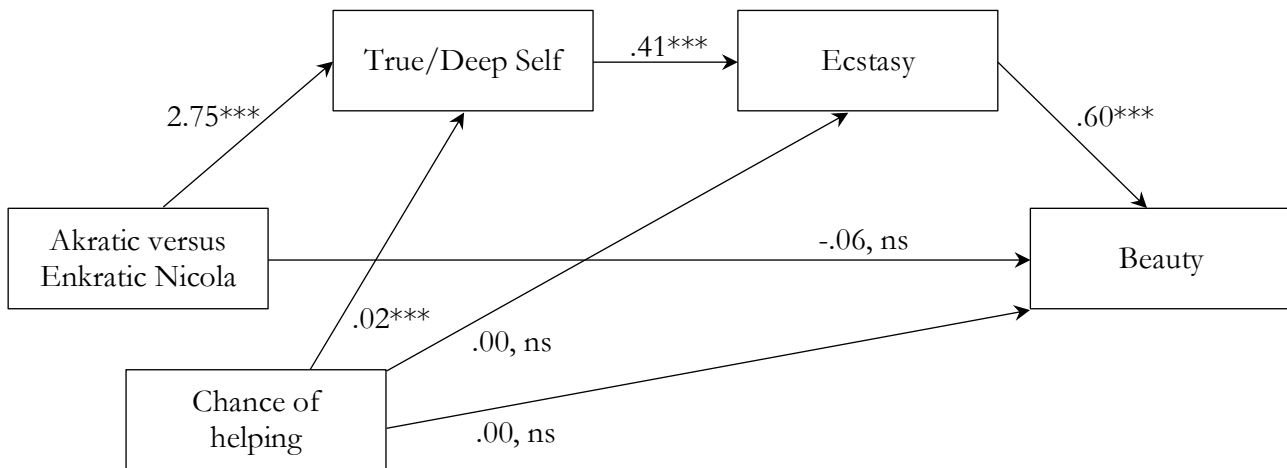

Figure 1. A multiple mediation analysis showing the effect of condition on judgements of beauty via judgements of appearing to express the true/deep self, and feelings of ecstasy, with judgements of the chance of helping as a covariate, where *** = $p<.001$, ** = $p<.01$, * = $p<.05$, † = $p<.1$, and ns = not significant

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[10] Since participants seemed to approve of the Akratic Nicola's action slightly more than Enkratic Nicola's action more, a reviewer for this journal wonders whether this might help explain the difference in beauty judgements. When entering approval in as an additional mediator in parallel to the pathway via the deep/true self, this pathway was also significant, though the indirect effect was considerably smaller (Condition > Approval > Beauty = .09, 95% CI [.00, .19]; Condition > True/Deep Self > Ecstasy > Beauty = .49, 95% CI [.36, .64]). One possibility is that this is the result of an error on behalf of the participants (perhaps the result of a desire to encourage the Akratic Nicola, see Doran (forthcoming)). Another, more likely, possibility is that the participants may find the Akratic Nicola to be more beautiful to the extent that her action tends to give rise to more ordinary kinds of appreciative affect in expressing that she is deeply and truly good, in addition to being judged to be more beautiful to the extent that her action gives rise to ecstasy in expressing that she is deeply and truly good. Consistent with this idea, if one enters approval as the parallel mediator via the true/deep self, this pathway is also significant, though again much smaller than the pathway via the deep/true self and ecstasy (Condition > True/Deep Self > Ecstasy > Beauty = .49, 95% CI [.35, .65]; Condition > True/Deep Self > Approval > Beauty = .20, 95% CI [.08, .24]). Another reviewer for this journal wonders whether any of the feelings that make up ecstasy may be particularly important in mediating the effect of expressing the true/deep self to a greater extent. When entering the feeling items into the model individually, there was a significant indirect effect of condition on beauty via true/deep self judgements, even when controlling for the chance of helping, and entering approval as a parallel mediator. When entering the feeling items *simultaneously*, only the pathway via feelings of being moved and touched remained significant. The pathway via feelings of insight and inspiration also accounted for a fair amount of the unique variance, and more than the amount accounted for by feelings of approval, though this effect was only significant when analysing the data from all participants (though see also the results of the replication study). This suggests that feelings of being moved and inspiration may be *especially* important in mediating the relationship (further details of the analyses are provided in the *Supplementary Materials*). Thanks to both reviewers for pushing me on these points.

Discussion: These results are consistent with the claim advanced in §3. The Akratic Nicola's action does indeed seem to be more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action (0.48 units more, to be precise), and to appear to express the deep and true self to a greater extent (2.82 units more, to be precise), and to give rise to greater ecstasy (0.92 units more, to be precise; each measured in terms of agreement with statements expressing these constructs on 9-unit scales anchored at "4 – Strongly agree" and "-4 – Strongly disagree" with "0 – Neither agree nor disagree" as the midpoint). Consistent with *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*, these results suggest that the Akratic Nicola's action was .68 units more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action to the extent that it tended to appear to be 2.75 more units more well-formed in the sense of expressing her true and deep self, and in turn tended to give rise to 1.13 units more of ecstasy (each also measured in terms of agreement, as above). These results also suggest that the well-formedness involved cannot be explained in terms of the standard conceptions of well-formedness discussed in the literature to date. For while the Akratic Nicola was found to be 2.98 units more likely to be caring on any given occasion (measured on a 100-unit scale anchored at "1—No chance she'll help," and "100—Completely certain she'll help"), and every one-unit increase in the chance of helping was estimated to increase the appearance of expressing the deep and true self by .02 units (measured in terms of agreement, as above), the Akratic Nicola's action was estimated to be found to be .68 units more beautiful as a result of appearing to express the deep and true self, and in turn leading to greater feelings of ecstasy, once the effect of being thought to be more likely to be caring on any given occasion was controlled for.

§3.ii. Study 2

Method: As a direct, pre-registered replication (https://aspredicted.org/JMP_L4F), the materials and method were the same. The only difference was that the attention check was modified, as it was felt that this was too stringent in the exploratory study.

   Results: A gender-balanced sample of 675 participants from across the United States was obtained on Prolific, and a final sample of 651 participants was obtained after removing the data from those who failed the attention check or withdrew (49.3% Women, 49.3 % Men, 1.4% Other, Mean age = 43.33, SD (14.10).

   Results (a), reliability and confirmatory factor analyses: Reliability analyses and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to help determine whether the feeling items indeed measured a single construct, as expected. Like in study 1, the set of items had a Cronbach's alpha of .93, indicating that the items had excellent consistency (i.e. if someone scored one item highly, they were likely to score the other items highly too). Goodness-of-fit measures that are not overly sensitive to large sample sizes (such as was the case for this study), such as the Comparative Fit Index (.998) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (.009), indicated that a one-factor structure fitted the data well (further goodness-of-fit indicators are reported in the *Supplementary Materials*). On this basis, an overall ecstasy scale was calculated by taking the average of the ecstasy items.

   Results (b), main analyses: Examination of the distributions, kurtosis and skewness statistics by condition, and conducting non-parametric Levene's tests of homogeneity of variance, indicated that some of the measures of interest were not normally distributed and had non-homogeneity of variance. For this reason, independent samples t-tests were conducted with bias accelerated bootstrapping. In these tests, the means and standard deviations remain the same, but the estimates of the standard error and confidence intervals change, and tend to be more accurate (though again, the pattern of results is the same with ordinary independent samples t-tests).

   Unlike study 1, participants did not judge that the Akratic Nicola was more likely to help on any given occasion that someone is in need (Enkratic Nicola Mean=57.46 (SD=19.74), Akratic Nicola Mean=59.68 (SD=19.66), $t(649)$=-1.44, p=.15, ns, Cohen's d=-.11, Pearson's r = -.06; see Graphs 5 and 6.). Also unlike study 1, participants also did not approve of Akratic Nicola's action more than the Enkratic Nicola's action (Enkratic Nicola Mean = 2.97 (SD=1.47), Akratic Nicola

Mean= 2.98 (SD=1.45), $t(649)$=-.11, p=.91, ns, Cohen's d=-.009; Pearson's r = -.004; see Graphs 7 and 8).

Like study 1, participants judged the Akratic Nicola's action to appear to express her true/deep self to a much greater extent than they judged the Enkratic Nicola's action to appear to express her true/deep self (Mean for Enkratic Nicola=1.16 (SD=2.45); Akratic Nicola=3.22 (1.26), $t(481.51)$=-13.60, p<.001, Cohen's d=-1.06, Pearson's r = -.47, large effect size according to Cohen's (1988) rule of thumb of a Cohen's d of .8 for large effect sizes, very large effect size according to Funder and Ozer (2019) rule of thumb of r of .40 or greater; see Graphs 6 and 7). Participants also judged the Akratic Nicola's action to be more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action (Enkratic Nicola=2.66 (1.56), Akratic Nicola=2.90 (1.39), $t(639.45)$=-2.00, p<.05, Cohen's d=-.16, Pearson's r = -.08, small effect size according to Cohen's (1988) rule of thumb of Cohen's d of .2 for small effect sizes, and very small to small effect size according to Ozer and Funder's (2019) rule of thumb of r of .05 for very small effects and .10 for small effects; see Graphs 6 and 7) and to feel more ecstasy in response to the Akratic Nicola's action (Enkratic Nicola=1.54 (1.83), Akratic Nicola= 2.01 (1.69), $t(649)$=-3.50, p<.001, Cohen's d=.27, Pearson's r = .13, small effect size according to Cohen's (1988) rule of thumb of Cohen's d of .2 for small effect sizes, and small effect size according to Ozer and Funder's (2019) rule of thumb of r of .10 for small effects; see Graphs 6 and 7).
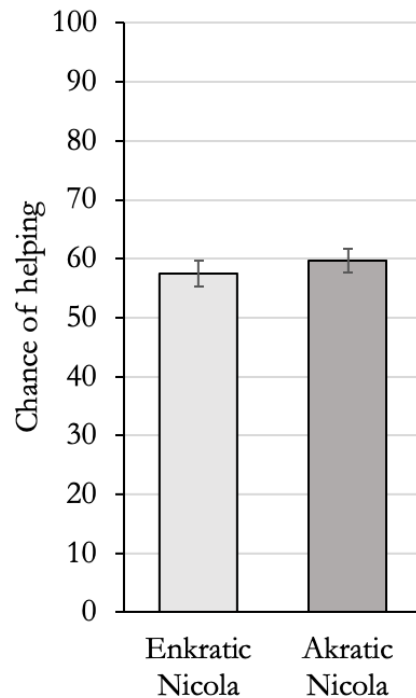

Graph 5. Graph showing judgements of each Nicola's chance of helping on any given occasion, where "1" is "No chance she'll help," and 100 is "Completely certain she'll help," and error bars indicate accelerated bias corrected 95% confidence intervals
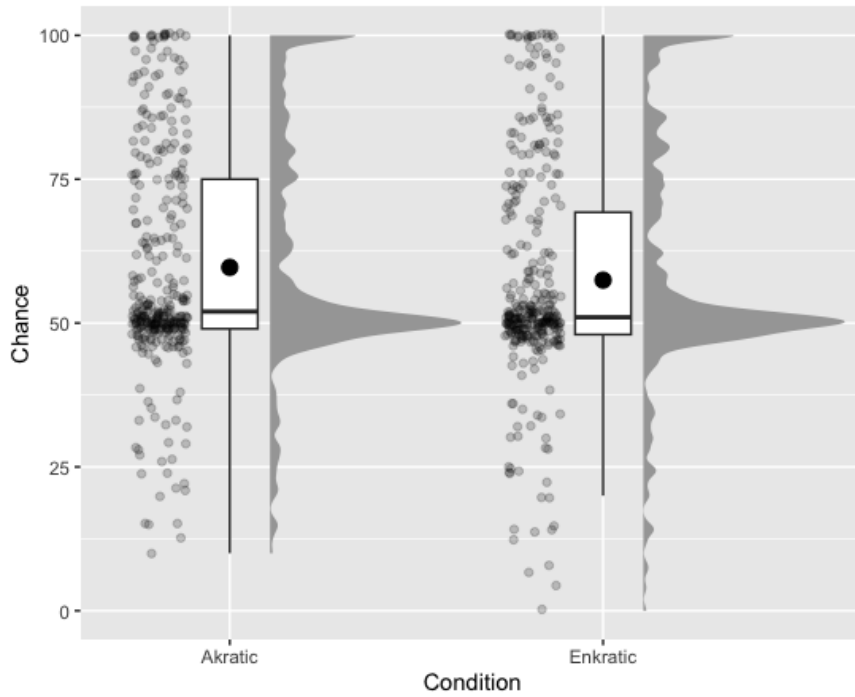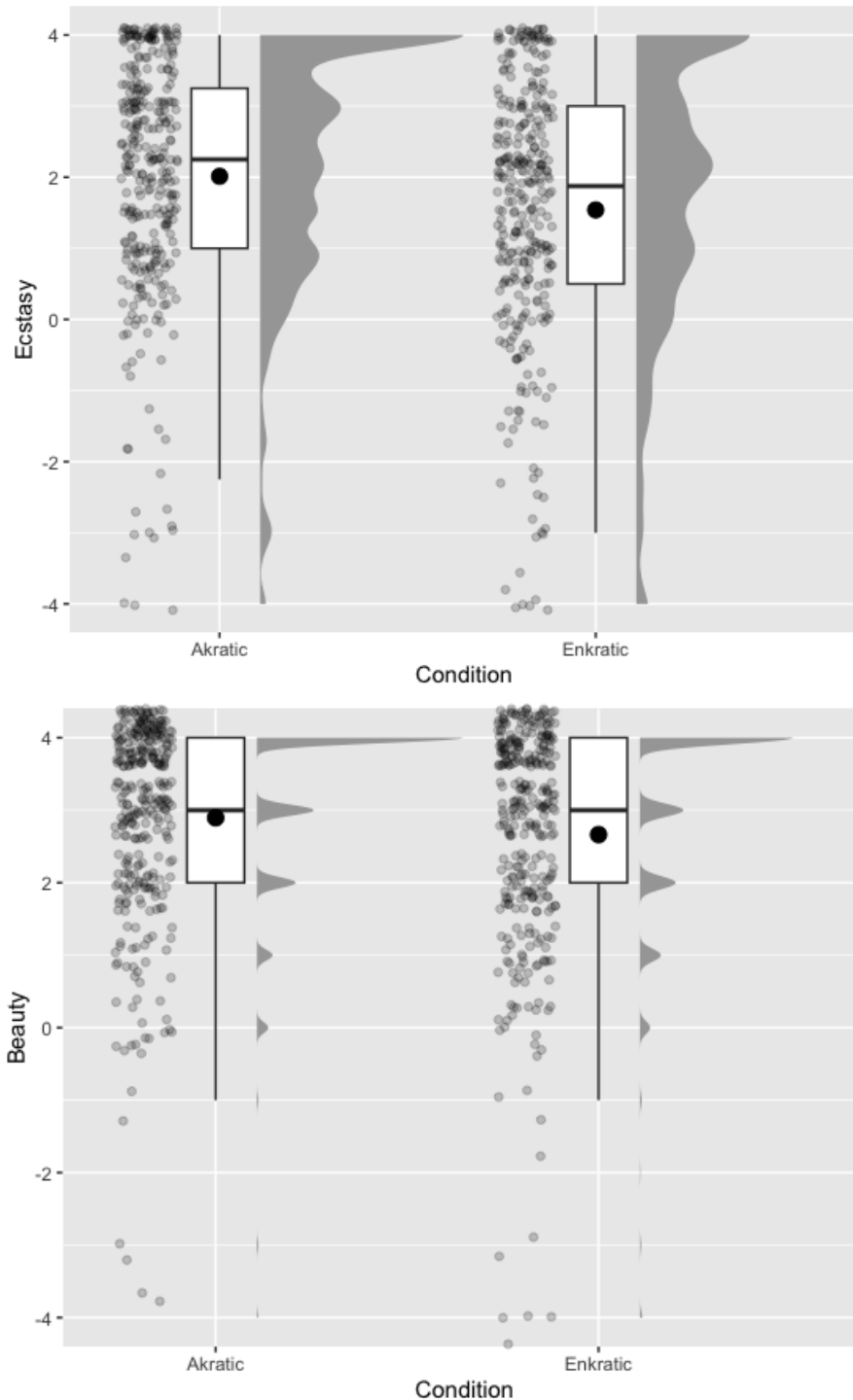
Graph 6. Rainplot showing distributions of judgements of each Nicola's chance of helping on any given occasion, where "1" is "No chance she'll help," and 100 is "Completely certain she'll help," and where the lines bisecting the box and whisker plot is the median value, and the dot is the mean value
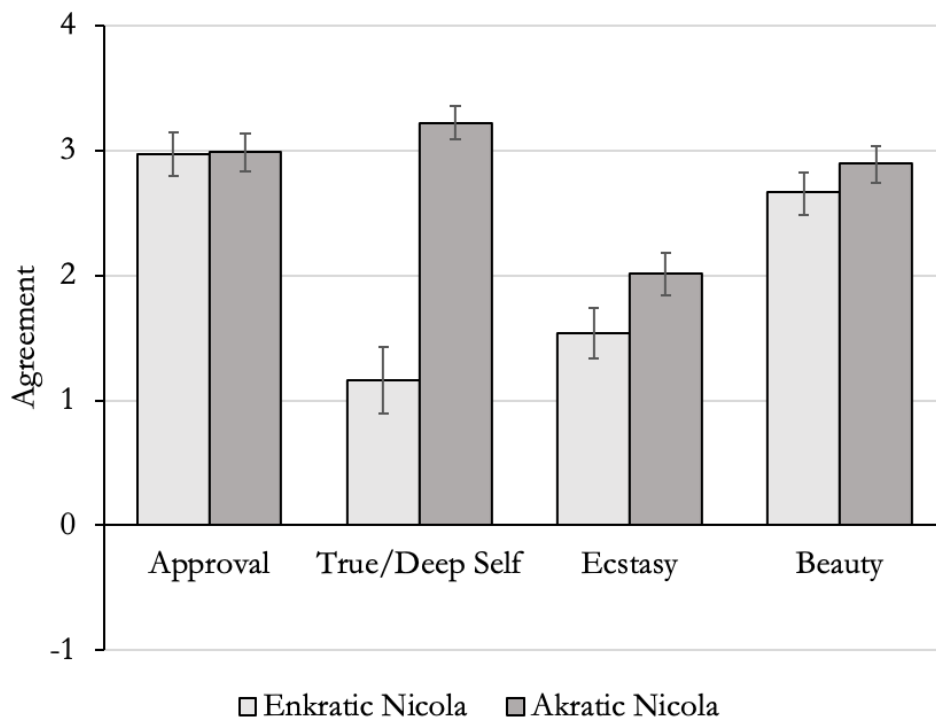
Graph 7. Graph showing agreement with judgements of appearing to express the true/deep self, of feeling ecstasy, and of beauty, where 4 is "Strongly agree," -4 is "Strongly disagree," and 0 "Neither agree nor disagree" and error bars indicate accelerated bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals
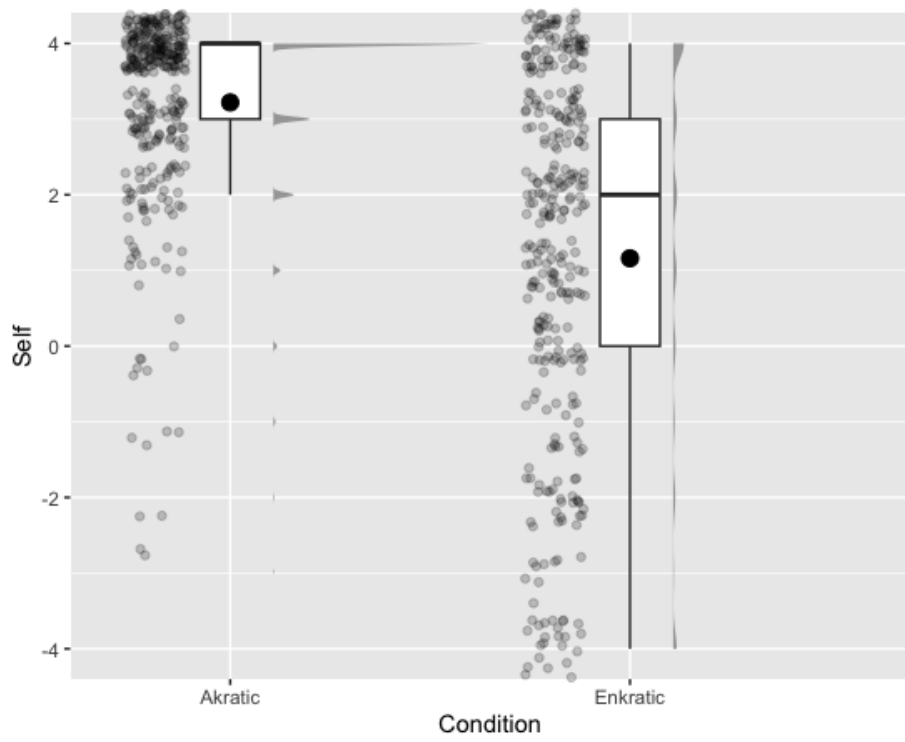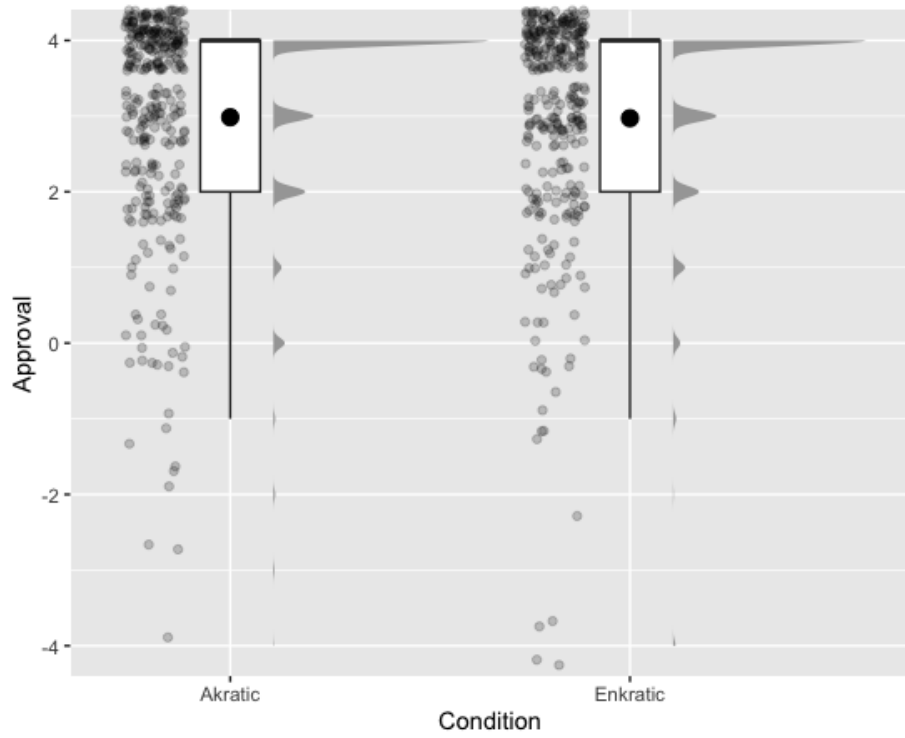
Graphs 8. Rainplots showing distributions of agreement with judgements of approval of action, appearing to express the true/deep self, of feeling ecstasy, and of beauty; anchored at "4 – Strongly agree," and "-4 – Strongly disagree," with the midpoint as "0 – Neither agree nor disagree," and where the line bisecting the whisker plot is the median value, and the dot is the mean value

Results (c), mediation analysis: To help assess whether judgements of the beauty of the action are influenced by judgements of appearing to express the true/deep self, and feelings of ecstasy in turn, a multiple mediation analysis using ordinary least squares path analysis (Hayes, 2017) was conducted (see Figure 2). Although the Akratic Nicola was judged to be no more likely to help on

any given occasion—and so is not likely to be thought to be more well-formed in the senses of degree and efficiency discussed in the literature to date—differences in judgements of well-formedness in these senses were nonetheless statistically controlled for by entering judgements of Nicola's chance of helping as a covariate. Like the results of study 1, there was a significant indirect effect which is consistent with the idea that the the Akratic Nicola's action was found to be more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action to the extent that the Akratic Nicola's action was found to appear to express the true/deep self to a greater extent, and gave rise to greater feelings of ecstasy in turn (.37, 95% CI [.28, .48]).[11]
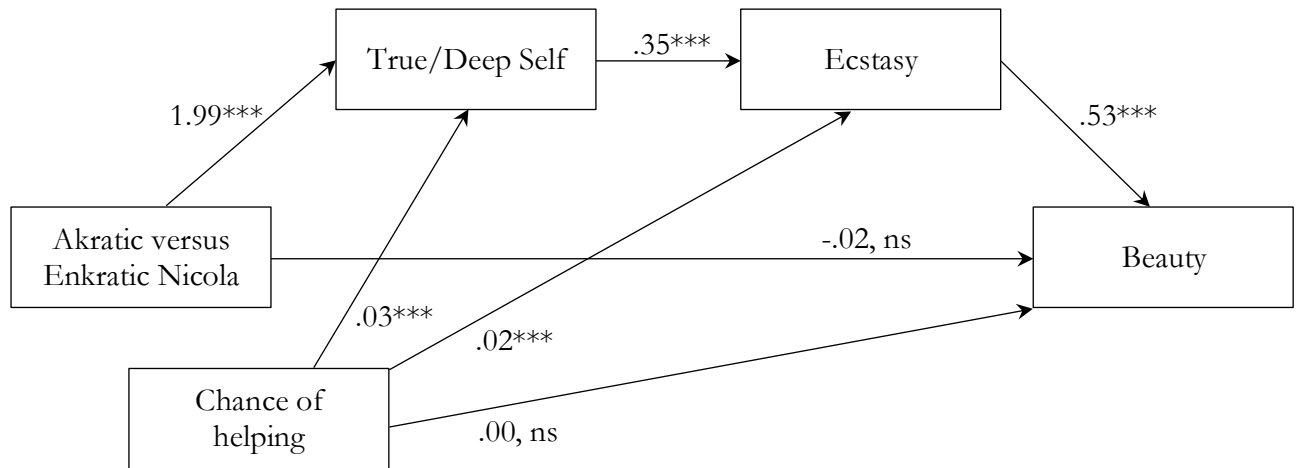

Figure 2. A multiple mediation analysis showing the effect of condition on judgements of beauty via judgements of appearing to express the true/deep self, and feelings of ecstasy, with judgements of the chance of helping as a covariate, where *** = $p<.001$, ** = $p<.01$, * = $p<.05$, † = $p<.1$, and ns = not significant

Discussion: These results are consistent with the claim advanced in §3, though the effect sizes observed were smaller in this study. The Akratic Nicola's action does indeed seem to be more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action (0.24 units more, to be precise), and to appear to express the deep and true self to a greater extent (2.06 units more, to be precise), and to give rise to ecstasy to a greater extent (0.47 units more, to be precise; each measured in terms of agreement

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[11] Even though participants did not approve of the Akratic Nicola's action more than the Enkratic Nicola's action in this study, the same analyses as in the exploratory study were conducted, as it is possible that there might still be an indirect effect via approval. When entering approval in as an additional mediator in parallel to the pathway via the deep/true self, this pathway was not significant, unlike in the exploratory study (Condition > True/Deep Self > Ecstasy > Beauty = .23, 95% CI [.16, .32]; Condition > Approval > Beauty = .00, 95% CI [-.11, .10]). However, if one enters approval as the parallel mediator via the true/deep self, this pathway is significant, though much smaller than the pathway via the deep/true self and ecstasy, as was the case in the exploratory study (Condition > True/Deep Self > Ecstasy > Beauty = .23, 95% CI [.16, .32]; Condition > True/Deep Self > Approval > Beauty = .16, 95% CI [.09, .24]). With this in mind, it may be the case that participants find the Akratic Nicola to be more beautiful to the extent that her action tends to give rise to more ordinary kinds of appreciative affect in expressing that she is deeply and truly good, in addition to being judged to be more beautiful to the extent that her action gives rise to ecstasy in expressing that she is deeply and truly good. With respect to the issue of whether any of the feelings that make up ecstasy may be particularly important in mediating the effect of expressing the true/deep self to a greater extent: When entering the feeling items into the model individually, there was a significant indirect effect of condition on beauty via true/deep self judgements, even when controlling for the chance of helping, and entering approval as a parallel mediator. When entering the feeling items *simultaneously*, the pathways via feelings of being moved and touched, and feelings of inspiration and insight, remained significant. This is consistent with the findings from the exploratory study, and suggests that feelings of being moved and inspiration may be *especially* important in mediating the relationship (further details of the analyses are provided in the *Supplementary Materials*).

with statements expressing these constructs on 9-unit scales anchored at "4 – Strongly agree" and "-4 – Strongly disagree" with "0 – Neither agree nor disagree" as the midpoint). Consistent with *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*, these results suggest that the Akratic Nicola's action was .37 units more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola's action to the extent that it tended to appear to be 1.99 units more well-formed in the sense of expressing her true and deep self, and in turn tended to give rise to .70 units more of ecstasy (each also measured in terms of agreement, as above). These results also suggest that the well-formedness involved cannot be explained in terms of the standard conceptions of well-formedness discussed in the literature to date. For while every one-unit increase in the chance of helping was estimated to increase the appearance of expressing the deep and true self by .02 units (measured in terms of agreement, as above), the Akratic Nicola's action was estimated to be found to be .37 units more beautiful as a result of appearing to express the deep and true self, and in turn leading to greater feelings of ecstasy, once any effect of being thought more likely to be caring on any given occasion was controlled for.

Overall discussion of both studies: Across both the exploratory and the replication study, a common pattern of results was found. The Akratic Nicola's action was found to be more beautiful, to express her true/deep self to a greater extent, and to tend to give rise to greater ecstasy. Moreover, in line with *True/Deep-Moral-Beauty*, the findings of both studies are consistent with the idea that the Akratic Nicola's action is more beautiful than the Enkratic Nicola to the extent that her action expresses who she truly and deeply is, even when her action is not approved of to a greater extent, and when she is not thought to be any more likely to act in a morally good fashion (or when this is controlled for).

§4. An Objection and Reply

Finally, in closing, let me briefly address what is likely to be the most important worry that might be had in the face of *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*. It might be wondered why *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty* has been formulated in terms of the *appearance* of expressing the deep or true self, rather than actually expressing the true or deep self themselves, and that further consideration of this issue might lead to a problem for *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*.

For some, a more natural way of conceiving of the relationship between beauty on the one hand, and truth and depth on the other, may be to say the following: an action is *perceived* to be beautiful when it is *perceived* to express a person's deep or true self and gives rise to feelings of ecstasy to that extent, but it is only *truly* beautiful when it *actually* expresses a person's deep or true self and gives rise to feelings of ecstasy as a result. Such a way of conceiving of the relationship might be especially appealing to those whose inclinations push them towards realist views.[12] Given that depth and truth are mind-independent properties of the world—the Pacific Ocean is *truly deeper* than the Mediterranean Sea, irrespective of how we might perceive the relative depth of the two—if someone were to judge an action to be beautiful in part because they wrongly perceive the action to express the true or deep self, then their judgement of beauty would in turn be false on such a view (to the extent that it had no other beauty-making features).

Indeed, since it is thought that the concept of the true or deep self is a fiction (Strohminger, Newman & Knobe, 2014), then no action would be beautiful for the reasons pointed to on such an account.[13] As such, features that lead us to think that an action is beautiful because it seems to be expressive of the true or deep self to a greater extent would mislead us. They would, in effect, produce an illusory beauty on this view.

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[12] As many might: in their recent survey of philosopher's views, Bourget and Chalmers (2022) found that 43.6% of philosophers generally think that aesthetic value is objective compared to 40.6% who thought that aesthetic value was subjective, and that the former jumps to 75% among philosophical aestheticians.

[13] Similarly, it might be doubted whether humans have a telos, let alone one that is to be morally good, rather than merely tending *to be thought* to have such a telos.

How is this objection to be dealt with? One possible response is to accept the proposed realist construal of *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty*, and to deny that the true or deep self is indeed a fiction.

In the case of truth, it might be argued that there is in fact a truth of the matter about the existence and nature of the true self. Perhaps the most prominent suggestion, often discussed under the rubrics of 'authenticity,' and 'whole-heartedness,' is that someone's true self is what they self-legislate for themselves, or what they (freely) will, or would choose to choose (e.g. Frankfurt, 1971, 1988). For example, we may smoke cigarettes, and even choose to smoke cigarettes, but this wouldn't be reflective of who we truly are unless we will it, or would choose to choose smoking, on this kind of account.

The problem with this response is two-fold. First, such an answer seems to reside principally on its intuitive plausibility, and, at best, there seems to be a great deal of individual, and blameless, disagreement about what is thought to reflect the true self, particularly where it comes to the differences that exist between the Akratic and Enkratic Nicola: there is evidence that those who tend to rely on rationality in their daily lives tend to regard the exercise of reason as reflecting the true self, and that those who tend to rely on their emotions in their daily lives tend to regard the exercise of emotion as reflecting the true self (Kokkoris et al., 2019). And worse, according to the data presented here, *overall* people seem to hold the opposite intuitions to what would be expected on the 'whole-heartedness' account: the Akratic Nicola acts against what she wills, and yet her action was thought to express her true self to a much greater extent than the Enkratic Nicola, who acts in line with what she wills.

Second, but relatedly, this response can at best provide a pyrrhic victory. For, if this dominant conception of the true self were indeed true, then at most it would show that judgements of beauty on the grounds of expressing the true self *could* be true in principle. In reality, as these data show, our judgements of the true self would be *routinely* wrong as a matter of fact, and so too would the judgements of beauty that they give rise to.

In the case of depth, it may be tempting to try to suggest that when an action is judged to be beautiful because it expresses the deep self in arising from morally good emotional dispositions (at least), then such judgements are indeed true. For the parts of the brain that realise our capacities for emotional responses and desires, at least, may in fact be literally deeper inside of us—lying, as they do in many cases, under the frontal cortex, which is the seat of reason and deliberation, in the limbic system—and so provided that we endorse a kind of mind-brain identity thesis (formulated in terms of mental capacities and brain areas), so too are the mental capacities that they are identical with (by the law of transitivity).

Such a response seems unsatisfactory, not only as it ties the existence of this kind of beauty to one theory about how mental capacities may be related to brain areas (which may turn out to be false) and may rely on an overly simplistic conception of the relevant functional neuroanatomy, but also because it violates a *prima facie* plausible kind of reasons-internalism, and moreover, seems to get the true grounds of this kind of beauty incorrect. Even if people know that the limbic areas are deeper inside the brain than the frontal lobe, it hardly seems likely that they are tracking such a fact when they make judgements of moral beauty. So if it is required to be justified in believing that an action is beautiful that one is aware of those reasons, then people routinely wouldn't be justified in believing that an action is beautiful when they make these judgements. This seems odd, for it seems that they routinely *are* so justified when making judgements of beauty of this kind. Moreover, if actions were indeed beautiful to the extent that they express moral goodness stemming from a brain area that is located deeper inside the agent, then if human brains were to become structured inside-out, so to speak, with the limbic system lying over the (now inappropriately named) frontal areas, then the actions that would be beautiful would change as a result. But that seems odd too. The reason for the oddness of both corollaries of this way of responding is the same: they get the correct grounds for judgements of beauty wrong (as should become clear when I lay out the second response).

So, this first response is fraught with difficulties. Instead, I want to suggest that a second response may be better. The first step in making this second response comes in noting that, in general, the same ostensible problem applies to a great many beauty-making properties, but is thought to leave those properties, and their ability to make for beauty, unscathed. A cirrus cloud may be beautiful because it has a delicate appearance, but it would be wrong to suggest that it is not truly beautiful because the cirrus cloud would not break if one were to strike it with a hammer. This is because for an object to be truly *aesthetically* delicate it does not need to be the case that it would break if force were applied to it, as would need to be the case for it to be truly non-aesthetically delicate (see e.g. Zangwill, 2014). To be truly aesthetically delicate, arguably an object needs only to be able to sustain the imagining of delicacy, such that the object is able to be imagined as being delicate. Furthermore, in paradigmatic cases of aesthetic delicacy, the object may also invite, as well as sustain, such an imagining.

With this in mind, it is clear that it would be wrong to understand the property of appearing to express the deep and true self in *Deep/True-Moral-Beauty* in the way suggested by this objection. For aesthetically-relevant purposes, as we are concerned with here, an action may be beautiful to someone in part if it is perceived as expressing an agent's true or deep self—that is to say, if their action can sustain the imagination of the action as arising from something deep and true—irrespective of whether the agent of the action has a true or deep self to express (in any mind-independent sense).[14] Overall, people with the form of having "hotter" capacities that lead them to act in a morally good way invite and sustain this imagining of the deep or true self to a greater degree than those with the form of having "colder" capacities that lead them to act in a morally good way, *ceteris paribus*. Although, as I noted earlier, there may simply be blameless individual variations with respect to which form tends to sustain this imagining.

What is the nature of this imaginative experience? In the case of imagining an action as expressing the deep self, this may involve imagistic imaginings of a spatial nature—including of the person as having greater depth (perhaps a sense of the person as being somehow in linear perspective to a greater extent). By contrast, in the case of imagining an action as expressing the true self, it seems likely that this may involve propositional imaginings of the action as expressing the agent's true self (for discussion of these, and other forms of imagining, see Liao & Gendler, 2020).

§5. Conclusion

Why are morally actions beautiful when indeed they are? I have argued that part of the answer is that actions are beautiful when they are perceived to be expressive of the true or deep self, and move us and inspire us to that extent. This, I have suggested, reveals that there are additional kinds of well-formedness in operation in the domain of moral beauty in addition to those that have been recognised to date: one which is connected to imagining a deep location for the goodness concerned, and another which is connected to imagining that the goodness stems from capacities which are essential to the person.

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[14] This account of delicacy draws heavily on Scruton's (1982; 1997) imagination-based account of aesthetic properties. But it is important to note that this is not the only alternative to the idea that aesthetic properties such as aesthetic delicacy (if they exist at all) are merely their non-aesthetic analogues. For example, Zangwill (2001; 2014) claims that, in addition to the non-aesthetic property of delicacy (which eggshells possess in being easily breakable), there is an aesthetic property of delicacy (which cirrus clouds tend to possess), which he thinks is also a mind-independent property of objects (Davies, 1994, provides another alternative). For reasons I note in the main text having to do with blameless individual differences, I do not think that such a mind-independent account would be plausible in this case.

The supplementary materials, as well as all data, analytic code, and materials, are available at https://osf.io/utge3/

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