

'MORAL' VERSUS 'AESTHETIC'

JEREMY WALKER
McGill University

Are *the moral* and *the aesthetic* distinct categories? And what does this question mean?

I begin by listing, quite unschematically, some pretty obvious ways in which we distinguish the notion of a moral judgement from the notion of an aesthetic judgement. Nothing I say here is meant to be final.

(1) Moral judgements are essentially *practical*, aesthetic judgements are either essentially not practical or not essentially practical. To pass a moral judgement is to commit yourself to some course of action, some cause, or way of life. The idea of a personal commitment to action is essential to moral judgements, even if the action is envisaged only indirectly. There is an analogy in this respect between moral judgement and commands, though probably not a very close analogy. Moral judgements, and moral principles, are essentially judgements, and principles, to be acted upon. Action is expected to flow from a man's moral principles, and is logically capable of flowing from them. It is logically possible to act upon a moral principle. Some have argued that it is logically necessary to act upon your moral principles, but this too seems a bit strong. Connected with these features of moral judgements is what has been called their 'categorical' nature. They cannot be avoided. Again, the notion of a 'moral agnostic' has something odd in it.

Aesthetic judgements, on the other hand, are not essentially related to action. To make an aesthetic judgement, or to subscribe to an aesthetic principle, does not commit the

speaker to any particular course of action or way of life. It is not possible to act *upon* an aesthetic principle, although it is possible to act *in accord* with one. Where a moral, or practical, principle is a maxim for what is to be done by you, an aesthetic principle is a general requirement about things, especially artefacts. This notion is strange. It is tempting to say there can be no aesthetic 'principles', only aesthetic judgements and their criteria. Again, the logic of aesthetic judgements relates them to notions which we contrast with the notion of action. We relate them to the notion of *play*, which is necessarily non-serious in just that sense in which action is thought of as necessarily serious. We relate them to the notion of *contemplation*, which is as distinct from the notion of action as the notion of the mere observer is from that of the agent. We relate them to the notion of *production*. Ordinarily this is distinguished from action in that making ends in a thing which has been made, and the success of the thing provides the criterion (if any) for the success of the making.

None of these distinctions is at all sharp. Action and doing relate to playing and playing games through the Janus-concepts of 'act' and 'play'. Acting and thinking tend inwards onto each other *via* the Janus-concept of 'intention'. Making both is a kind of 'doing', i.e. action, and can look like simple action when there is no palpable thing made, as in the case of music; action tends towards making when it is the mere producing of gestures. Worse, actions can be assessed aesthetically, and works of art and their production can be subject to moral considerations.

(2) Moral reasoning may terminate in the consideration of *personal ideals* and their application to the persons concerned. Your ideals are ordinarily thought (even by you) to apply to you as much as to the next man. This is some defence against fanaticism, hypocrisy and inhumanity. Nothing of the kind can affect aesthetic 'reasonings'. For *aesthetic ideals* are not personal ideals, i.e. ideals of what human beings ought to be like. They are not, or perhaps only not

necessarily, ideals whose realisation is in persons. They are ideals to be realised in things and especially artefacts. Sometimes they could not possibly be imitated or striven after by human beings.

Again, this distinction is not sharp. Some personal ideals may well be called 'aesthetic', and it is logically possible that all your personal ideals might be aesthetic ones. Still there are some kinds of aesthetic ideal which no sane man could adopt as his personal ideals, and some kinds of personal, i.e. 'practical', ideal which no sane man could adopt as his aesthetic ideals. Also the consideration that aesthetic ideals, if they apply to persons at all, apply to yourself as much as anyone else may terminate a piece of aesthetic argument.

Related to this (*prima facie*) distinction is the fact that the notion of a personal ideal is inseparable from some notion of the human *virtues*, especially the moral virtues, which are virtues of the character. It is tempting to claim that a personal ideal simply *is* an idea of the perfectly virtuous person. Aesthetic ideals, on the other hand, can surely sometimes be independent of such notion as justice, courage, temperance and wisdom.

(3) These distinctions are logically related to certain more general distinctions between the 'conceptual context' of the notions *moral* and *aesthetic*. The notion of moral goodness, i.e. goodness *qua* human being, is logically tied to the more specific notions of, say, goodness as a father or a husband, goodness as a citizen, goodness as a judge, goodness as a friend. Everyone necessarily occupies a good many of these or such-like positions, or roles, and so moral assessment cannot be independent of assessments of 'success' in filling such roles. Again, the notion of moral goodness and the notion of virtue are logically related to a battery of concepts including happiness, welfare, interests, need, and desires; there are plenty more. They are related, perhaps, *via* the notion of a 'good of man', or 'human good'.

To say this is, perhaps, only to say that in trying to come to a moral assessment these and such-like concepts are necessarily relevant ones. 'The moral' has sometimes been so defined that reference to these concepts is *part* of its definition. But this is too strong. It would be better, though vaguer, just to say that the notion of 'the moral' must be related to these concepts if it is to have any *content*.

There seems to be a link, too, between the notion of the moral and the concept of *society*. 'Morality', *qua* social institution, is often seen as having the function of harmonising society, co-ordinating the conflicting aims and interests of different persons, and ensuring some stable basis for the individual pursuit of personal ideals. And it is possible that your moral ideal may be not so much a 'personal' as a 'social' ideal, namely an ideal picture of society and its members.

None of these concepts is related to the notion of 'the aesthetic' in the same kind of way. In adopting an aesthetic stance it is not *necessary* to take into consideration the notions of happiness, welfare, interests or needs. It may be possible. Nor is it necessary to consider *society* in your arguments about aesthetic principles. It is sensible to claim, as some have done, that the aesthetic stance is distinguished precisely by its *necessarily not* touching on these notions.

(4) I mentioned *character* above. The notion of character is fundamental to moral thinking. In passing moral judgement on someone it is necessary to consider his character, i.e. his personal characteristics. Of these we have to consider especially his 'voluntary' characteristics, i.e. those which are under his control. He can try to acquire them or try to lose them. Again, the notion of 'moral knowledge', knowing what sort of thing to do or what sort of thing ought to be done, is a species of 'practical knowledge'. Practical knowledge is as much the ability to act in certain ways as the ability to utter reflective judgements. It is going too far, perhaps, but not absurdly too far, to claim that only the courageous man

knows the difference between rashness, courage, and cowardice.

Aesthetic 'knowledge', if this notion makes sense, is not a matter of the state of your character. It is a matter of what is called *taste*. I doubt if these notions are sharply distinct, but certainly we can sometimes distinguish them. For it makes sense to say that you have good taste but are no better off, morally speaking. Nor is the notion of 'taste' a conceptual neighbour of the notion of 'character'. Taste is related to the notion of *sensibility* and sensitivity. There may be some connexion between the notion of, say, sensibility and the ideal person, but at least it cannot be direct. Taste, again, is related to the notions of sensing and perceiving. (This is implicit in the etymology of the word 'aesthetic'). So even if there is *some* relation between the notions of character and taste, it is still true that considerations about a man's character cannot be essential to all aesthetic thinking.

There is, we might put it, an essential difference between the kinds of fact that can be used intelligibly as the criteria for moral judgements, and the kinds that can be so used for aesthetic ones. Aesthetic considerations and moral considerations need not, and probably cannot, always be co-extensive. What is *necessarily relevant* to the moral stance is not necessarily relevant to the aesthetic stance. It is tempting to go further, and say that the criteria for moral assessment must involve reference to *reason*, while the criteria for aesthetic assessment must involve reference to the senses. This could be misleading. It does not imply that reasoning, and the invocation of reasons for your statements, are inessential to aesthetic thinking. It does not imply that purely sensual or 'pathological' (Kant) facts are irrelevant as such to moral thinking.

A more speculative way of marking this family of distinctions would be this. Moral and *intellectual* excellence seem to be more closely related to one another than do aesthetic and intellectual excellence. Some thinkers have identified moral

and intellectual excellence, at their upper ends at least; others have tried to show that they necessarily go together. These attempts are extravagant, but not either silly or senseless.

(5) The notion of morality involves the notion, or some notion, of an *obligation*, the notion of a *duty*, and the notion of a *right*. Some thinkers have gone so far as to define the concept 'morally good' in terms of these notions (among others). Others have gone so far as to define these notions in terms of the concepts 'morally good' and 'good'. Both go too far, but again their journey was not impossible or senseless. There clearly are conceptual relations, complex though they undoubtedly are.

But it can *sensibly* be doubted whether the notion of aesthetics has *any* room for the notion, say, of an obligation or a duty. There are, of course, 'hypothetical obligations' imposed by the practical necessities of artistic creation. This absence may tempt us to compare the notions of the aesthetic and the *supererogatory*, which is normally so defined as to *exclude* the notion of obligation.

Connected with the seeming absence from 'the aesthetic' of the notion of obligations is the apparent absence of the notion of *sanction* which plays a part in 'the moral'. There are several obvious reasons for this absence. Works of art do not, we ordinarily think, necessarily affect the lives and actions of others in the same way that our actions do. They do not necessarily affect other people's interests, welfare, or happiness. They cannot be claimed as direct expressions of character in the same way that your voluntary actions directly express your character. Again, these distinctions are not sharp. Works of art obviously can affect people's lives. They can have an effect, more or less indirect, on people's happiness, even. They can be claimed to show something about the *person* who created them.

Compare, again, the typical absence of any idea that 'aesthetic education' is a *necessity* and should be *compulsory*. (Typical, not universal). 'Moral' education', i.e. teaching of

and training in obeying accepted maxims and in thinking morally, is thought to be necessary for the obvious reason that we cannot, any of us, escape the need to act. But we do not have to create works of art, nor to look at or listen to them either. The vagueness of our ideas hereabouts may go to justify those thinkers who have claimed that aesthetic education is *necessary*, either for reasons like those which show moral education to be necessary, or because it is seen as *part* of the latter. One essential point of sanctions, i.e. rewards and punishment, is to further the aims of the educational processes. This explains the absence of the element of compulsion in aesthetic education. Aesthetic 'knowledge', judgement, taste, and skill can sensibly all be thought to be supererogatory.

This may, also, go towards explaining the typical absence from the aesthetic stance of blame, praise, contempt, and respect: all typical of the moral stance. These attitudes can enter your 'aesthetic' stance, and be directed at people, but (I should say) not people *qua people*. Bad painters are blamed for being bad *painters*, i.e. paintings bad pictures. The notion of *justification* plays, in general, a reduced part in aesthetics. So do the related notions of excuse, mitigation, and vindication. They are all notions whose application, and maybe whose origins too, are primarily *legal*, like the notions of obligation and right themselves.

There is a conceptual proximity, or overlap, between the notions of *the moral* and *the legal*. For one thing, both deal with avoidable activity and its effects and the degree or kind of its avoidability. Moral deliberation has been compared to the kind of argumentative process typical of the law-courts. Moral principles have been seen as a kind of *law*. There are dozens of other points of contact. But pretty well none of this is true of *the aesthetic*. I can think offhand of only one notion which mingles elements from both conceptual spheres: namely the notion of *ensorship*.

(6) Moral judgements seem to be essentially concerned

with the *psychology* of action; aesthetics is not. Discussion of a man's motives, purposes, desires, and aims is essential to moral thinking, since it is essential to a correct assessment of both what he did, i.e. did voluntarily, and how freely he did it. Aesthetic judgements can sometimes involve this sort of psychological appreciation. It is sometimes argued that we cannot pass judgement on a work of art without knowing what its maker intended. If this is true, we certainly have to discuss his intentions in making the thing. There is, too, obviously room for a 'philosophical psychology' of *aesthetic* production.

It seems sensible to present a theory of moral activity from the standpoint of the moral agent himself, rather than, say, from the standpoint of the external judge or critic. But the idea of presenting an aesthetic theory from the artist's point of view is not so immediately compelling. It is not *clear* that an artist-aesthetics must necessarily be illuminating in the way that an agent-ethics must, and that a critic-aesthetics cannot be illuminating just as a judge-ethics cannot (or cannot finally). Again, the grounds may lie quite simply in the distinction between assessing a person or what he does and what, i.e. *the thing*, he produces. For the thing produced *can* intelligibly be dissociated from the act of production.

The concept of *freedom* can be used to draw a distinction (again, not sharp) between the notions of morality and aesthetics. In aesthetic discourse we use a number of notions, including the notion of freedom, which do not seem to be significant in our common moral discourse. Examples are *genius*, *originality*, *creativity*, *imagination*, *profundity*, *power*, and *greatness*. (N.B. This bunch is obviously very large, and very heterogeneous). Now some thinkers have tried to use these notions in discussing morality, and some, like Nietzsche, have tried even to put them in the central place. Both do something which, though not absurd or unintelligible, is counter to ordinary practice. There is some force in claiming that persons who are outstandingly 'original' in their ap-

proach to practical and moral problems are *beyond* the limits of ordinary moral assessment and may even extend these limits. Again, there are aesthetic traditions (cultures) in which the notion of freedom, and the rest, are comparatively insignificant.

(7) *Moral* attitudes must be limited in their possible objects. They can be directed only on persons, personal characteristics, and situations which essentially involve the notions of person or voluntary action. But aesthetic attitudes are not limited in this way. Anything whatever may be the object of an aesthetic attitude. For example, you can *admire* only those entities to whose condition you can intelligibly aspire. Only an insane person could 'aspire' to the condition of, say, a statue or a poem.

Perhaps this, or a related, distinction can be made by distinguishing the kinds of *belief* which can serve as grounds for moral, and aesthetics, attitudes. For an attitude is constituted as 'moral' (in part, at least) by the beliefs about its object which ground it. It is constituted as 'moral' by the kinds of fact which are cited as *reasons* for such an attitude. I mentioned some of these earlier; they include facts about people's interests and happiness, for example. There must be, presumably, a loose group of kinds of fact which, similarly, constitute your attitude as 'aesthetic'. Clearly *these* facts are not necessarily, and perhaps not usually, included in the former group, nor *vice versa*.

(8) I mentioned principles earlier. Consider now the concept of a *criterion* for a judgement or assessment. This is linked with what I said just above. One might claim that the *criteria* for a judgement's counting as a 'moral judgement' were (at least partly) different from the criteria *for* a judgement's counting as an 'aesthetic judgement'. On the other hand, one might claim that the criteria typically used *in* moral judgements were (at least partly) different, perhaps necessarily different, from those typically used *in* aesthetic

judgements. These are claims I have implicitly been looking into so far.

But, third, one might claim that the *logical nature* of the 'criteria' used in moral judgements differed from the logical nature of the 'criteria' used in aesthetic judgements. Perhaps there are two more or less distinct *senses* of 'criterion' here; perhaps there are two *kinds* of criterion. Now *this* claim is not clear. It might mean that the *logical relation* between the facts cited as reasons for a moral judgement and that moral judgement *differs* from the logical relation between the facts cited as reasons for an aesthetic judgement and that aesthetic judgement (assuming they *are* 'good reasons' in each case). This is hardly less obscure, as it stands. But we may assume that there are different kinds of *standard*, at any rate; for example, standards of grading, standards of pricing, and standards of measurement. (There are others too). Measuring, grading, and pricing (or 'valuing') are all distinguishable activities. In each, we compare members of sets of things among themselves; but we compare them in different respects and for different purposes. And a 'judgement of measurement', a 'judgement of grade', and a 'judgement of price (value)' are systematically (logically) different kinds of judgement.

One possible distinction between moral and aesthetic judgements is, then, as follows. In moral assessment we give a different *relative weight* to the various standards involved from the relative weight given to the standards involved in aesthetics assessment. Moral assessment, perhaps, gives great weight to standards of value (price); aesthetic assessment, rather, gives weight merely to standards of assessment. In morality we are concerned with *values* and *grades of value*. In aesthetics we are not. Perhaps, more generally, moral judgements involve standards and 'criteria', whereas aesthetic judgements involve only 'considerations'. But these distinctions are obviously blurred; they come together in the common concept of *a reason*.

(9) Closely connected is the following. A 'conceptual analysis' of the notion of *evaluation* turns up a number of closely related concepts. Among them are *attention, discrimination, appreciation, grouping, ordering, considering*. These and such-like activities seem to be necessarily involved in the explicitly 'evaluative' activities of (say) announcing a choice or a preference, or expressing a judgement (i.e. moral or aesthetic). This throws an unusual light on the relation between the 'moral' and the 'aesthetic'. It is tempting to see the *aesthetic* as a preliminary, and necessary, stage in the evolving of the fully *moral* stance. It would still be possible to achieve the aesthetic point of view without going further, putting your aesthetic judgement at the service of your 'moral' deliberations. And this would not reduce the value, or the seriousness, of the merely aesthetic. For it is arguable, now, that the most important part of a moral evaluation is the 'aesthetic' appreciation it involves.

A second, but more speculative, point is this. The aesthetic stage may now seem to be intelligible only in the light of the complete evaluative process. It may seem to be an abstraction from this (hypothetical) process. One may say: the aesthetic stance essentially 'goes over into' the moral. At any rate it is plain that they are *related* through these concepts.

Let me now turn to some of the ways in which the notions of *moral* and *aesthetic* judgement seem to *resemble* one another. Here, too, my list is quite unschematic, my remarks not worked out.

(A) Both the notions of moral and aesthetic judgement necessarily involve a bunch of notions which centre on the notion of *satisfaction*. One bunch contains such notions as *pleasure, enjoyment, comfort, and harmony*. Another contains such notions as *want, need, fulfilment, perfection, and interest*. (They are, of course, conceptually linked to one another). Now some thinkers have tried saying that morality, and moral concepts, have *no* conceptual links with any

notion of this bunch (except, possibly, the notion of perfection). Others have tried saying that moral concepts are linked so closely that they are, perhaps, *themselves* notions from the same heap. Both attempts seem to be extravagant.

There are still, perhaps, ways of distinguishing the moral from the aesthetic. We might say that the moral relates (more directly) to the notion of *need* and its companions, whereas the aesthetic either does not or does not so directly. Or we might try distinguishing (roughly) two notions of interest; the sense of *welfare* or genuine advantage, applicable to morality, and the sense of *curiosity* or excitement, applicable rather to aesthetic. Obviously what I am interested in need not be what is to my interest. Probably it is much wider in scope.

There is clearly an analogy between the involvement with *both* moral *and* aesthetic judgement with these notions, and the place in relation to each of the notion of an *ideal*. Both involve the *general* concept of something which is an *end* of action, or something which is of *intrinsic* value as opposed to merely instrumental worth, or something which is *good* (*desirable*) *in itself*. This will blur the possible distinction between types of 'satisfaction-concept' used tentatively above to distinguish moral and aesthetic judgement.

(B) Related is this. There is an interesting group of notions which seem to *span* the alleged distinction between the moral and aesthetic categories, i.e. to serve in each. Some of these notions are *harmony*, *grace*; *judgement*, *discrimination* and *appreciation*; *involvement* and *sympathy*. (N. B. Again a very heterogeneous collection!)

Consider the concept of a *judgement*. Now we tend to see judgement, perhaps, as a faculty of assessing evidence and giving the 'right' decision upon it. We see it in quasi-legal terms. But judgement is also the faculty (capacity) which manifests itself in *the gnomie*, e.g. in proverbial wisdom. This brings out more clearly its necessary relation to the concept of *experience*. And experience is here 'that which you have met in your daily life'. An essential element in

both moral and aesthetic thinking is the kind of *knowledge* which comes only through experience. It is a kind of knowledge which cannot be reliably taught, although we certainly acquire it and in so doing learn. It cannot be formulated adequately in a set of maxims, rules or principles. It is, in part, what we mean when we say someone 'Knows what he's talking about'. One reason for its unteachability and unformulability is that it is a capacity for noticing and counting as relevant *imponderable evidence* (in Wittgenstein's fine words). And this is certainly part of the capacity for both aesthetic and moral judgement.

(C) A final resemblance between the notions of moral and aesthetic judgement is this. Both matters of morality and matters of aesthetics are generally thought to be in some sense *independent* of our *individual* aims and desires and values. Perhaps it is just meant that there are certain checks and limits on what we can say and how we can say it in both cases. It may still be true that these checks and limits depend on human aims and desires *in general*.

Philosophers have tended to express this ordinarily understood set of limitations, by saying that morality (or aesthetics) is *objective*, that moral (aesthetic) judgements are capable of *truth or falsity*, and moral arguments of *validity or invalidity*. It may be less portentous to claim that in each case there is a demand for such qualities as impartiality, fairness, consistency, disinterestedness, accuracy and lucidity. It is still perhaps true that (say) disinterestedness counts for more in moral thinking than in aesthetic thinking.

Together with this resemblance goes a resemblance between what what are ordinarily understood as the moral stance and the aesthetic stance. Both may be said to involve the notions of *order, structure* and *system*; perhaps even the notions of premiss, evidence, proof and conclusion. Sometimes the applicability of such notions to the concept of morality is expressed by representing (say) moral principles as 'axioms', moral judgements as 'theorems', and moral

reasoning as a kind of 'deduction'. Though this obviously goes too far, it is less absurd in the case of moral thinking than for aesthetic thinking. Or, again, it is sometimes said that moral thinking is necessarily a kind of *rational* process. Aesthetic thinking, presumably, though not *so* rational is still also somewhat rational.

I have tried to list a number (*not all*) of the ways in which moral and aesthetic judgement differ from, and resemble, each other. My list is not offered as complete in any respect. I have not tried to *order* the features I have pointed out. I have not tried to *connect* them with each other *via* their logical marks. I have not tried to *define* them, i.e. to make precise what features I was pointing out. I have not (even if this makes sense) tried to *explain* them. More important, perhaps, I have not compared moral and aesthetic judgement in respect of their differences from, and resemblances to, (say) legal judgements or the judgements of umpires and referees in games.

It is plain (1) that the notion of a 'moral judgement' is a notion which has very many different marks, and marks of very many different sorts. The same goes for the notion of an 'aesthetic judgement'. And it is also plain (2) that, partly as a consequence of (1), the notion of a 'moral judgement' differs from the notion of an 'aesthetic judgement' in a great many ways, and a great many sorts of ways, but also resembles this notion in a great many ways.

These elementary observations have a number of striking implications. First, they imply that no *one* feature of (say) moral judgements can serve to fully identify the notion of a moral judgement, or to fully identify the distinction between this notion and the notion of (say) an aesthetic judgement. Second, they imply that the question, "What is a moral judgement?", cannot have any simply answer, e.g. and answer on the Platonic-Socratic model. And they strongly suggest that it can have no orderly or systematic answer either. To answer this question, then, we must plunge deeper

into the morasses I have indicated, and others too. Third, they imply that the question, "What *is the* difference between moral and aesthetic judgement?", offends against 'Russell's Law' for the use of identifying description. (See above). And, fourth, they suggest very strongly that the notion of *the category of the moral* (or *the category of the aesthetic*) is internally and externally indistinct.

If these implications are correct it follows that any attempt to define, formalise or schematise the notion of a moral judgement must be premature. This is not to deny the utility of 'model-building' in moral philosophy. It is to claim, rather, that all our models must be recognised as inadequate. The complexity of the features which mark 'moral judgements' renders any unitary model inadequate because unitary. The vagueness of these notions renders any formal model inadequate because formal. The disorder and disconnectedness of these features renders any schematic model inadequate because schematic. These inadequacies are of different types.

Complexity should not be confused with vagueness. The sciences are complex but not vague. Redness is a vague, not a complex, concept. But the phenomena of morality (and aesthetic) involve both complexity and vagueness. To treat the complex as vague is to commit one kind of intellectual, and philosophical, mistake. To treat the vague as complex is to commit another. They are, typically, mistakes committed by very different kinds of philosopher. To treat complex phenomena as merely vague is to abdicate one's responsibility for analysing them clearly and distinctly. To treat merely vague phenomena or concepts as complex is to abandon one's responsibility for describing them faithfully and realistically. Both have occurred in moral philosophy, but the latter much more often recently than the former.

The appeal to 'return to the facts' need not, though it is liable to, signify a woolly-headed Luddism of the intellect. It need not be an appeal for the smashing of all models

as such. It may be an appeal for the right use of models, among other things. As such it has three elements. First, that we should *view* our models rightly, i.e. as defective if offered as descriptions of the (moral) phenomena. Second, that we should *use* our models rightly, i.e. for pointing up the differences between the (moral) phenomena and the models themselves. Third, that the *end* of our model-building activities should be right, i.e. an appreciation and understanding of the (moral) phenomena themselves for their own sake. But the appeal to 'return to the facts' is not totally un-Luddite. For it implies, I think, that the activity of model-building, and the models so built, are merely *one* means among others to this end. And it suggests, perhaps, that this is neither a very important nor a very valuable means to this end.

"The words we call expressions of aesthetic judgement play a very complicated role, but a very definite role, in what we call the culture of a period. To describe their use or to describe what you mean by a cultured taste, you have to describe a culture. What we now call a cultured taste perhaps didn't exist in the Middle Ages. An entirely different game is played in different ages." (Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology & Religious Belief*, p. 8). For *moral* judgements we should drop the 'very definite'. And this brings us close to the view expressed in the *Philosophical Investigations* (paragraph 77): "But if the colours in the original merge without any hint of outline won't it become a hopeless task to draw a sharp picture corresponding to the blurred one? Won't you then have to say: "Here I might just as well draw a circle or a heart as a rectangle, for all the colours merge. Anything —and nothing— is right". —And this is the position you are in if you look for definitions corresponding to our concepts in aesthetics or ethics."

If moral philosophers cannot 'draw sharp pictures' what is their job? This is another question. But at least we can say this: they must *look at* the 'blurred pictures'.

RESUMEN

¿Son lo moral y lo estético categorías distintas? ¿Qué significa esta pregunta?

Se comienza dando una lista de algunas de las formas más obvias de distinguir la noción de juicio moral de la noción de juicio estético.

(1) Los juicios morales son esencialmente prácticos, no así los estéticos. Los juicios y principios morales son esencialmente juicios y principios de acuerdo con los cuales se actúa. Relacionada con estos rasgos de los juicios morales está su naturaleza 'categórica'. Los juicios estéticos, en cambio, no están esencialmente relacionados a la acción; un principio estético es un requerimiento general acerca de cosas, especialmente 'artefactos'. Estaríamos tentados a decir que no puede haber 'principios' estéticos, sino sólo juicios estéticos y sus criterios. La lógica de los juicios estéticos los relaciona con nociones tales como *juego*, *contemplación*, *producción*, que contrastamos con la noción de acción.

(2) El razonamiento moral puede abocar a la consideración de *ideales personales*; los *ideales* estéticos, en cambio, no son necesariamente ideales que se realicen en personas, sino más bien en cosas y especialmente en artefactos.

La noción de ideal personal es inseparable de la noción de virtudes humanas, especialmente las morales, mientras que los ideales estéticos pueden ser independientes de ellas.

(3) Estas distinciones están lógicamente relacionadas con otras más generales entre los 'contextos conceptuales' de las nociones de lo moral y lo estético. En una valoración moral son relevantes nociones como las de bondad moral y virtud que, a su vez, están lógicamente relacionadas con las de felicidad, interés, necesidad, deseo, etc. La noción de 'lo moral' debe estar relacionada con estos conceptos para que tenga algún *contenido*. Existe también una conexión entre lo moral y el concepto de *sociedad*. 'La moralidad' puede verse como institución social y es posible tener un ideal 'social' en vez de un ideal 'personal'. Ninguno de estos conceptos se relaciona de la misma manera con la noción de 'lo estético'.

(4) La noción de 'carácter' es fundamental a la reflexión moral. Para hacer un juicio moral acerca de alguien es necesario considerar su carácter, sus características personales. El 'conocimiento moral' —saber qué debe hacerse— es una especie de 'conocimiento práctico'. El conocimiento 'estético', si tiene sentido esta noción,

no es asunto de carácter, sino de *gusto*, la cual está relacionada con las nociones de *sensibilidad* y *sensitividad*.

Son diferentes los tipos de hechos que pueden usarse como criterios para juicios morales y los que pueden usarse para juicios estéticos. Consideraciones estéticas y morales no siempre son co-extensivas. Podría quizá decirse que el criterio para una valoración moral implica referencia a la razón, mientras que el criterio para una valoración estética implica referencia a los sentidos; la excelencia moral y la intelectual están más relacionadas entre sí que la estética y la intelectual.

(5) La noción de moralidad supone las de *obligación*, *deber* o *derecho*. No ocurre lo mismo con 'lo estético'; allí también están ausentes la noción de *sanción*, la idea de *necesidad* y la de una 'educación estética'. 'Vergüenza', 'elogio', 'desprecio' y 'respeto', nociones típicas de lo moral, no aparecen en la estética; la noción de *justificación* juega en estética un papel reducido.

(6) Los juicios morales parecen ocuparse esencialmente de la *psicología* de la acción; no así los estéticos. Parece razonable presentar una teoría de la actividad moral desde el punto de vista del agente moral mismo; pero, en cambio, no parece tan razonable presentar una teoría estética desde el punto de vista del artista. Se señala que el concepto de libertad puede utilizarse para distinguir entre las nociones morales y las estéticas.

(7) Las actitudes morales, a diferencia de las estéticas, están limitadas en cuanto a sus posibles objetos. Sólo pueden estar dirigidas a personas, características personales y situaciones que implican esencialmente las nociones de personas o acción voluntaria.

(8) Se afirma que el *criterio* para que un juicio sea un 'juicio moral' es distinto al criterio para que un juicio sea un 'juicio estético'; además se examina la naturaleza lógica de los 'criterios' usados en juicios morales y la de los usados en juicios estéticos. Así la moral, y no la estética, se ocupa de *valores* y *grados de valor*; los juicios morales implican 'standards', 'criterios', en tanto que los juicios estéticos sólo implican 'consideraciones'. Estas distinciones, bastante confusas, se unifican en el concepto común de *una razón*.

(9) Un 'análisis conceptual' de la noción de valoración podría aclarar algunos conceptos estrechamente relacionados. Entre ellos los de *atención*, *discriminación*, *apreciación*, *agrupación*, *ordenación* y *consideración*. Estas actividades y otras similares parecen estar necesariamente implícitas en las actividades explícitamente 'valorativas' como, por ejemplo, la de enunciar una preferencia o

una elección o expresar un juicio (moral o estético). Esto vierte una luz inesperada sobre la relación entre lo moral y lo estético.

Se examinan algunos casos en que las nociones de *lo moral* y *lo estético* parecen tener una semejanza entre sí.

(A) Tanto el juicio moral como el estético, implican necesariamente conjuntos de nociones que se basan en la de *satisfacción*. Uno de estos conjuntos contiene nociones tales como las de *placer, alegría, comodidad y armonía*; el otro, las de *necesidad, demanda, cumplimiento, perfección e interés*. Podría decirse que lo moral se relaciona en forma más directa que lo estético con el segundo conjunto. Podría distinguirse entre dos nociones, la de *bienestar* que se aplica a la moralidad, y la de *curiosidad* que se aplica más bien a la estética.

(B) Hay, además, un grupo de nociones que parecen utilizarse tanto en las categorías morales como en las estéticas. Por ejemplo: *armonía, gracia, juicio, discriminación, apreciación, simpatía*.

(C) Una última semejanza entre las nociones de juicio moral y estético es la siguiente: se piensa generalmente que tanto los asuntos de moralidad como los de estética son en cierto sentido *independientes* de nuestros propósitos, deseos y valores *individuales*. Quizá esto signifique únicamente que hay ciertas limitaciones en aquello que podemos decir o en cómo podemos decirlo. Pero puede seguir siendo cierto que estos límites dependen de propósitos y deseos humanos en general. Los filósofos han tratado de expresar este conjunto de limitaciones diciendo que la moralidad o la estética son *objetivas*, que los juicios morales pueden ser verdaderos o falsos y que los argumentos morales son válidos o inválidos. Quizás sea menos pretencioso decir que en cada caso existe una demanda de cualidades tales como imparcialidad, consistencia, desinterés, exactitud y lucidez. Tanto la actitud moral cuanto la estética implican nociones de *orden, estructura y sistema*, y quizá también las de *premisa, tendencia, prueba y conclusión*.

Aunque las diferencias y semejanzas enumeradas no son completas, es posible observar (1) que la noción de un juicio moral tiene características muy diferentes y de muy distintos tipos. (2) También es evidente, en parte como consecuencia de (1), que la noción de un *juicio moral* y la noción de un *juicio estético* difieren en muchos aspectos, pero también son semejantes en otros.

Estas observaciones elementales tienen varias implicaciones: (a) Ningún rasgo por sí solo puede servir para identificar completamente la noción de un juicio moral, para distinguirla, por ejemplo, de la de *juicio estético*. La pregunta acerca de qué es un juicio estético no puede tener una respuesta simple, ordenada y sistemá-

tica, sino que hay que sondear más profundamente en los meandros que he indicado y en otros afines. (c) La pregunta acerca de cuál sea la diferencia entre juicios morales y estéticos contraviene la 'Ley de Russell' para el uso de descripciones que identifican. (d) Sugieren que la noción de la *categoría de lo moral* (o de lo estético) es interna y externamente indistinta.

Si estas implicaciones son correctas, entonces todo intento de dar una fórmula, de esquematizar la noción de un juicio moral será prematura. La complejidad de los rasgos que caracterizan a los 'juicios morales' nos llevan a reconocer como inadecuados todos nuestros modelos.