# A METAETHICAL OPTION FOR THEISTS

## Kyle Swan

### ABSTRACT

John Hare has proposed "prescriptive realism" in an attempt to stake out a middle-ground position in the twentieth century Anglo-American debates concerning metaethics between substantive moral realists and antirealist-expressivists. The account is supposed to preserve both the normativity and objectivity of moral judgments. Hare defends a version of divine command theory. The proposal succeeds in establishing the middle-ground position Hare intended. However, I argue that prescriptive realism can be strengthened in an interesting way.

KEY WORDS: *John Hare*, *metaethics*, *expressivism*, *moral realism*, *motivational internalism*, *divine command theory*

I THINK MANY PEOPLE WOULD LIKE THE FOLLOWING two sets of features to be true about morality, and indeed speak and behave as if they were true. Firstly, morality is objective. Among those that say moral objectivity requires a theistic grounding, the idea is that God has revealed through his commandments, and by other means as well, moral laws. When human beings make a moral judgment, they have or express a belief concerning a moral state of affairs that is either accurate or inaccurate with respect to those divine laws. Therefore, moral judgments have truth conditions. When these truth conditions are met, as they obviously can be since some moral judgments may be accurate with respect to divine moral law, moral judgments are true. Nontheists may make analogous claims invoking a different standard of objective truth in morality, but, in general, these features of moral judgments are the ones thought to be the best evidence for some type of moral realism.

Secondly, there is the idea that when human beings have a moral thought, or when they express one, their emotions, or their affections as they were sometimes called, are fundamentally engaged. When human beings make a moral judgment, they have or express an attitude and take a motivational posture toward some state of affairs. This is what is supposed to make moral judgments normative. The author of Psalm 119 takes delight in the statutes of God; he loves the moral law: "Therefore, all your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; I hate every false way" (verse 128); "I hate and abhor lying, but I love your law" (verse 163). Quite different motivational postures, other conative states

of mind, might find expression in other, nontheistic accounts, but, in general, these features of moral judgments are the ones thought to be the best evidence for some type of moral expressivism.

Most twentieth century metaethicists would contend that this combination of metaethical commitments is problematic. After all, typically moral expressivists are antirealists about moral predicates. Since, according to moral antirealists, there are not any moral properties such as rightness or wrongness for moral predicates to refer to, first-order moral judgments do not even aspire to objective truth. Rather, according to one view, such judgments merely express approval or disapproval. According to another more recent account, moral judgments simply express the acceptance of norms that either permit the action or state of affairs, or prescribe guilt on the part of the agent responsible for it and resentment on the part of others (Gibbard 1990).

In the typical characterization of moral expressivism, these two ideas—antirealism and expressivism—are combined. The first presents a negative, semantic claim. It says that ethical sentences are not truth-apt, or at least that they lack robust truth conditions.[1] The second presents a positive, more pragmatic claim. It says that a necessary function ethical sentences serve is that of expressing any of an assortment of attitudes. I think that this typical characterization of moral expressivism is misleading and has led to the neglect of an interesting option in metaethics. To correct this, let us call the first thesis "noncognitivism" or "antirealism" and only the second thesis "expressivism." Typical expressivists combine these two theses. Instead of expressivism, call this theory expressivist-noncognitivism or antirealist-expressivism. Typical moral realists reject both theses. However, there is also logical space for an option in metaethics that accepts expressivism and rejects noncognitivism. Expressivism does not entail noncognitivism. Moral realism is compatible with moral expressivism.[2]

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[1] I will consider an alternative account that combines antirealist moral expressivism with a deflationary theory of truth. According to this account, ethical sentences would appear to have truth conditions, but they would not be robust truth conditions since the deflationary theory's requirement for truth conditions is so thin. See section three.

[2] See Alston 1968. In this neglected paper he considers a series of theses. According to what he labels (3), "x made a moral judgment about O"-df. "x expressed a moral attitude toward O." According to what he labels (5), "x expressed a moral attitude toward O" is a necessary condition of "x made a moral judgment about O." Alston argues that (3) must be rejected as the only adequate analysis of moral judgment, even if (5) is true. (5) is just what I have been referring to as moral expressivism. Considering (3) the only adequate analysis of "x made a moral judgment about O" is the way Alston presents what I have called moral noncognitivism or moral antirealism. So if Alston's arguments against (3) being the only adequate analysis of moral judgment work, then moral antirealism is false even if moral expressivism is true; moral realism is compatible with moral expressivism. Copp 2001 presents a full account of what he calls "realist-expressivism."

To think otherwise seems to presuppose a false dilemma. Unless I am already an antirealist about morality, why should I think that a moral judgment could not express approval or disapproval (or norm acceptance) and, at the same time, have robust truth conditions? Why should I not think that moral judgments express attitudes and beliefs? On the view under consideration, when people make moral *assertions*, they thereby express certain *conative* states of mind. Accepting the central moral realist thesis, that moral judgments make moral assertions, does not preclude accepting the central moral expressivist thesis, that moral judgments necessarily express certain conative or motivational states of mind. Similarly, accepting the central thesis of moral expressivism does not preclude accepting the central thesis of moral realism. Therefore, though long having gone unnoticed, the combination of features of moral judgments that I noticed many people seem to be committed to adds up to a tenable metaethical position, and one that preserves both the objectivity and normativity of moral judgments.

## 1. John Hare's Prescriptive Realism

In *God's Call* (2001), John Hare seems to propose such a position, calling it "prescriptive realism" (viii). In fact, upon my first reading of the book, this is exactly the sort of position I thought Hare intends to propose. It is not, though. His claim about prescriptive realism is subtly different. Hare's primary aim in the book is to give "an account of God's authority in human morality" (vii). Hare does intend for prescriptive realism to draw upon the same combination of features of moral judgments. According to Hare,

> We feel pulled in two directions. We want to say that value is created by God and is there whether we recognize it or not. In that sense value is objective, and we feel pulled towards some form of realism. But we also want to say that when we value something, our hearts' fundamental commitments are involved. "Where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also," Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:21). When we value something, spend time with it, sacrifice things for it, our deepest loyalty is expressed. In that sense our valuation is subjective, and we feel pulled towards some kind of expressivism. We have to have a way of saying both of these things together, and I am going to try to suggest a way [ix].

Hare's way, though, is not to combine moral realism with moral expressivism. He is not simply noticing that moral realism does not rule out moral expressivism (and that moral expressivism does not rule out moral realism), and that therefore pretty much any moral realist position is compatible with any moral expressivist position. He does not consider this; or, to the extent that he does consider it, he seems to regard this

as false. Rather, Hare is attempting to stake out a middle ground be-
tween what we might call substantive moral realism[3] and antirealist-
expressivism—positions that are logically incompatible with each other.

Hare's primary aim is to develop a version of divine command theory
that would bring together what he takes to be the important realist and
expressivist aspects of moral realism and moral expressivism and dis-
card the rest. The discarded aspects, according to Hare, are theses that
are mere accretions to the two positions. Furthermore, for Hare, these
mere accretions constitute the only issues of substance between realism
and expressivism. When, and only when, proponents of both sides make
a series of concessions and these accretions are stripped away, there is
no problem combining realism and expressivism. I believe that Hare has
the resources in his account to present a slightly stronger view. Substan-
tive moral realists need not make any concessions to moral antirealists
in order to preserve the normativity of moral judgments. Furthermore, I
worry that such concessions may compromise the ability of the account
to preserve the objectivity of moral judgments. So while prescriptive re-
alism as a middle-ground position and prescriptive realism as a combi-
nation position both enjoy certain advantages over standard versions of
moral realism and standard versions of antirealist-expressivism, I will
argue in Section 2 that prescriptive realism as a combination position
enjoys certain advantages over Hare's prescriptive realism as a middle-
ground position.

Regardless, though, of which of these is the stronger position, the sug-
gestion of this type of position is novel and interesting, and it raises
many questions. For example, in developing the prescriptivist aspects of
prescriptive realism, we might wonder exactly what kind of conative, or,
to use Hare's term, "orectic" (vii) state of mind is expressed in making
a moral judgment. In addition, in what sense are the relevant orectic
states expressed? There are even more questions raised in developing
the realist aspects of the view: What determines the truth conditions of
moral judgments? What sort of "facts" and "properties" are the moral
facts and moral properties that true moral statements refer to? Are they
mind-independent? Are they reducible to properties that can be defined
in wholly nonethical terms? Do they at least supervene on properties
that can be defined in wholly nonethical terms? If so, then what ex-
plains why they supervene in exactly the way that they do? Hare's an-
swers to these questions fill out the prescriptive-realist position in such
a way that it occupies middle ground in the twentieth century Anglo-
American metaethical debates, and incorporates God's will for human
behavior.

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[3] Substantive moral realism is the view that moral properties, such as moral goodness,
are real, substantive properties.

Hare characterizes the twentieth century debates between substantive moral realists and antirealist-expressivists as a series of concessions by both sides to each other. Each concession brings them progressively closer to each other without, however, abandoning what Hare takes to be the central positive thesis of their respective views. The result is a kind of middle ground or compromise of the two positions: prescriptive realism.

For example, what Hare calls Platonism is presented as the least concessive moral realist position. According to Platonism, "goodness is objective, in the sense that it is there independently of us . . . . To call something good is to evaluate, and to point to a value property—the goodness which the thing has" (4). For a substantive moral realist, the primary semantic role of moral predicates is to refer to properties, moral properties like rightness or wrongness. If an action or state of affairs has that property, then a moral proposition ascribing that property to the action or state of affairs is a true proposition.

The Disposition Theory of John McDowell strips away some of the features of substantive moral realism that Platonism possesses (McDowell 1985). The concession involves recognizing that "values are like colors; they do not have to be seen as real independently of general human dispositions to respond to them in a certain way in appropriate circumstances" (J.Hare 2001, 2). Humans in general may be disposed to evaluate lying, for example, as morally wrong. This evaluation is not objectively true in the sense that a substantive moral realist might say such a judgment is true. It is not objectively true in the sense that lying has some property "wrongness." Rather, the evaluation is "understood relative to the capacities of subjects" (26). "Lying is wrong" is objectively true in the sense that its truth does not depend on any *particular* human subject's evaluations. According to Hare, it is "in this sense [that] the independence required for objectivity is preserved" (26).

I will return to this concession in the opening paragraphs of Section 2. I regard it as a compromise of substantive moral realism and unnecessary in order either to show that moral realism can be combined with moral expressivism, or to preserve the normativity of moral judgments. In any case, Hare continues reviewing the progress of the debates between proponents of realist views and proponents of expressivist views in the twentieth century to the point where all the necessary concessions have been made and all matters of substance between the two positions have been stripped away. Moral realism and moral expressivism can then be combined; prescriptive realism is the result of this combination. Hare's view is that when someone makes a moral judgment, for example, that he should tell the truth, he is expressing both that God wills it that he be truthful and that he accepts a norm, or a set of norms, that prescribes truth-telling. God has created us with the relevant affective

equipment to experience his calling. We might call it a moral sense. In making a moral judgment one does not merely report the deliverances of this moral sense. In addition, in making a moral judgment one necessarily expresses a certain kind of attitude or motivational stance toward God's call. In true judgments, this attitude is one of acceptance or endorsement.

Hare attempts to develop the notion of God's call as an external and objective pull through a defense of what he considers a Scotist version of divine command theory. According to Scotus, human beings were created with the final end of being in a loving relationship with God. However, as a result of the fall, our conception of the good is altogether skewed. In our actions, we tend to overestimate the importance of our own interests. To be set right, we require directional signals to our final end. God provides these signals, determining the path to it. Hare writes, "Using the term 'command' to describe what gives the route to this end is traditional, but less appropriate than some such term as 'call'; for 'command' stresses the power relation rather than the love relation which governs not just the destination but the selection of route" (53). Hare is not thereby claiming that what everybody means by "morally right" is "what God's will requires of us." Rather, the divine will makes it true that something is morally right. Moral propositions are, in effect, propositions about God's call to us. According to theists, these propositions have truth conditions that are sometimes met.

There is a difference between how our final end governs the destination and how it governs the selection of the route to it. Our final end, to partake in the intimacy that exists between the three persons of the Trinity, is the destination. There is a necessary connection between what it means to be human and God's call to partake in that relationship. However, the selection of the route is, in an important sense, contingent. Our final end still orients the selection of route, but "God is not, for Scotus, limited in the ways in which we can be ordered to our final end" (68). According to Hare, "The point is that there is no necessary connection between our created natures and the way we reach our final end." The moral law could have been much different than it is. "As things are, however, God has willed that we reach our final end in the way that the ten commandments specify" (69). According to his discretion, he has called us along this path rather than another. His only constraint is that the route he does map out should lead to a union with him.

This version of divine command theory apparently allows Hare to sidestep the familiar dilemma Socrates presented in the *Euthyphro*: whether morally right acts are right owing simply to God commanding those acts, or whether God has commanded those acts because they are morally right, quite apart from his having commanded them. It is a question concerning the direction of fit between God's commands and morally right

actions. Hare claims that this question is inappropriate to his version of the theory because in it the direction of fit goes both ways: "Our duties to our neighbor are right both because God chooses that route and because it is a route to the final good" (100). The account has aspects of both natural law theory and theological voluntarism.

Firstly, it is necessary, according to Hare and Scotus, that God should love God. If God desires to have colovers, it is necessary that he should order them toward the primary good, himself. Secondly, however, exactly how he orders them toward their final end is entirely contingent on his will. Therefore, God's commands are, in one sense of the term, arbitrary. He has wide discretion to impose, clarify, or suspend any number of obligations upon humans. In another sense, though, the obligations he wills are not arbitrary for they are not willed without reason. They "are chosen by God as a route to our final end" (73).

It is one thing to accept a normative principle that one ought to do what God wills. There are legitimate debates about whether or not one ought to accept such a normative principle. It is another thing, however, to identify the property "goodness" or "rightness" with the divine voluntarist property. Even if Hare adequately responds to the former issue, there might be a different sort of problem having to do with the latter. Moral realists need to explain how moral terms, such as "goodness" or "rightness," stand in relation to their descriptive property of choice. Hare picks out the supernaturalist property of being willed by God. It is possible, though, that one might encounter another being using "good" or "right," perhaps someone on Moral Twin Earth, for whom those moral terms stand in relation to some different descriptive property.[4]

Moral Twin Earth thought experiments are descendents of R. M. Hare's parable in *The Language of Morals* of the Christian missionary (R. M. Hare 1952, 148–49). The general issue is that any metaethical view that understands moral terms to refer to a descriptive property, say that the divine voluntarist property of being willed by God, will need to account for the fact that other groups may use the same term to refer to a different descriptive property, perhaps some natural property. In that case, even if one said, "Lying is morally wrong" and the other said, "Lying is morally right," there may still be no genuine disagreement between them; the two would be talking past each other because the meaning of "right" is different for the theological voluntarist and the naturalist. The problem is that intuitively we think that there should be genuine disagreement between people who make these claims.

This issue arises in the context of another realist concession Hare has endorsed: "a value term and a descriptive term that do not mean the same can point to the same causal property" (J. Hare 2001, 34). John Hare's

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[4] See Horgan and Timmons 1993.

solution to Moral Twin Earth thought experiments is to claim that if
there is agreement about the use of "right" between the Earthling and
the Moral Twin Earthling, then both will be using "right" to commend
some action or state of affairs and what is essential about the use of the
term is preserved (37). According to Hare, the Moral Twin Earthling may
identify "right" with a different underlying descriptive property than the
Earthling, but since both use "right" as a term of commendation, they
can have genuine disagreement about, say, the permissibility of lying.
One says that it is not the sort of thing to be commended, and the other
says that it is.

This solution further highlights the way in which Hare compromises
substantive moral realism. In fact, I believe that this solution suggests a
kind of noncognitivist expressivism.[5] On the one hand, if noncognitivists
are right and moral terms are used essentially to commend, then it is
easy to see how people can have genuine moral disagreement when they
commend different things. On the other hand, if moral realists are right
and moral terms are used essentially to refer to properties, then when
people use the terms to refer to different properties, it seems that we must
view them as using the terms with different meanings. In that case, they
do not really disagree; they only have a verbal disagreement in the way
Earthlings and Twin Earthlings would only have verbal disagreement
about the use of "water" when that term has different meanings for them.
What is necessary is to show that the moral case is one of genuine dis-
agreement between two communities even though one community takes
"right" to refer to "willed by God," and another thinks "right" refers to,
say, "maximizes happiness." If Hare wants to maintain that his view is
a moral realist view, then the fact that in both communities "right" is a
term of commendation does not show that there is genuine disagreement
between the two communities.[6]

So far, Hare is committed to the idea that what morality is about is
complying with God's will and command. According to this account of
morality, we have been created with the necessary affective equipment
to feel and respond to the pull of God's call. However, there is more than
this to making or having a moral judgment. What would be missing
is a role for the autonomy of moral agents, and therefore the norma-
tive or motivational aspect of moral judgments. At least on the face of
it, a divine command theory seems to preclude any input on the part

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[5] It is essentially the same solution as R. M. Hare, who is a noncognitivist: "It is because
in its primary evaluative meaning [good] means neither of these [descriptions], but is in
both languages the most general adjective of commendation, that the missionary can use
it to teach the cannibals Christian morals" (R. M. Hare 1952, 149).

[6] See Copp 2000 and Merli 2002 for responses to issues about Twin Earth that do not
compromise moral realism. Any discussion of them here goes beyond the issues of primary
concern in this paper.

of human beings. If this were right, the motivational force that moral judgments often seem to exert over us would be puzzling. The theory would fail to capture the intuition that when people say, for example, "Lying is wrong," they thereby express disapproval of, or a refusal to endorse, lying. In response, Hare develops a particular understanding of human autonomy such that moral judgments retain this feature within the divine command theory. Almost incredibly, Hare claims that this is a Kantian understanding of human autonomy.

Interpreters of Kant, according to Hare, have been wrong to saddle him with the "constitutive" view of autonomy that says reflective endorsement is the standard for the rightness of an action. This kind of view captures the normative aspect of moral judgments, where the endorsement of an action is very important. It does so, however, at the expense of the realist aspect—to think that this is what makes an action morally right constitutes "a kind of creative anti-realism," according to which rational persons create the moral law (J. Hare 2001, 93). Hare's interpretation has Kant arguing not that we create the law, but that we appropriate it. We will the law to be our own.

This view of autonomy does not at all conflict with divine command theory. The version Hare defends says that "we ordinary moral agents have to see our role as recapitulating in our own wills the declaration in God's will of our duties" (95–96). Moral judgments express "a correspondence of our wills with the law (which we do not create)" (96). They are propositions to the effect that a moral standard, that is, God's will, is justified. Someone who makes a moral judgment thereby expresses endorsement of that standard. In that sense, prescriptive realism is a theory that says moral rightness is not entirely independent of the human will, since moral judgments involve the engagement of our will. With such judgments we subscribe (or fail to subscribe) to God's will for us (whether we realize we are doing that or not). The theory says that moral rightness is not entirely dependent on human will either, since moral judgments are accountable to an independent standard.

## 2. A Strengthened Prescriptive Realism

If this is all true of Hare's prescriptive realism, then it seems to me that he has not just provided a middle-ground position between substantive moral realism and antirealist-expressivism. It is a cognitivist theory that also gives a plausible account of the normativity of moral judgments and moral thoughts. Prescriptive realism could be both fully realist and fully expressivist. It is not necessary for substantive moral realists to make any concessions to noncognitivists. There are three reasons I can think of why Hare, or someone else, might deny this. Firstly, he might think that substantive moral realism entails the denial of moral expressivism. I argued in the introductory section that this is not true. Substantive moral

realism entails the denial of antirealist-expressivism, but moral realists need not deny the thesis concerning the function ethical sentences serve.

Secondly, he might think substantive moral realism entails the existence of palpable moral particles, which do not exist, or Moorean properties that do not exist in time or as objects of sense perception, which is metaphysically spooky. I do not see why substantive moral realism should entail either of these theses. Rather, it is a view committed to the idea that moral predicates generally have the same semantic role as ordinary descriptive predicates. They refer to properties. Moral predicates refer to moral properties, such as rightness or wrongness. For example, "wrong" refers to the property of wrongness or that of being wrong. Moreover, they are moral properties that do not merely consist in the attitudes and motivational stances of people. Also, it is a view committed to the idea that when an action or state of affairs has that property, a moral proposition ascribing that predicate to the action or state of affairs is true.

Thirdly, he might think that this view about the semantic role of moral terms reaches too far. Hare's account of the realist aspects of prescriptive realism does seem a bit weaker than the one I have presented. Recall that he endorses a realist concession that entails one aspect of McDowell's Disposition Theory. Hare may only be committing himself to thinking that there is a good independent of any particular human evaluations and, therefore, our judgments can be either true or false. However, such a weak reading of his view may compromise the ability of his account to preserve the genuine objectivity of moral judgments. If the realist aspect is that thin, then it may be difficult for Hare to distinguish the broad outline of his view from one that combines antirealist-expressivism with a deflationist account of the meanings of "true" or "fact."[7] Such a position would allow even an antirealist to say that moral sentences are true or factual. For a deflationist account of "true," calling a sentence "true" is simply to affirm it (Horwich 1990; Soames 1998, Part III). Truth, by this theory, is not a substantive property. A fully adequate notion of truth is captured in a simple equivalence schema: for any meaningful declarative sentence $p$ there is an equivalent sentence "The proposition that $p$ is true." If this is right, then to say that it is true or a fact that lying is wrong is just a wordier way of saying that lying is wrong. "Lying is wrong" is true if and only if lying is wrong. This kind of position appears

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[7] This is one strategy pursued by quietists about disputes between realists and antirealists in metaethics. Quietists deny that there is a substantive issue to debate between realists and antirealists. See Horwich 1993 and Dworkin 1996. John Hare's position is quietist since his version of prescriptive realism is the result of stripping away all issues of relevant dispute between substantive moral realists and antirealist expressivists. See J. Hare 2001, 3, n.

to capture the intuition that when people make a moral judgment, they take themselves to be expressing a genuine proposition that is truth-apt, but it can capture that intuition without committing itself to the thesis that moral judgments have robust truth conditions.

Similarly, with any departure from substantive moral realism Hare may find it difficult to distinguish the broad outline of prescriptive realism from his father's prescriptivism, which agrees that moral judgments have a descriptive aspect, as well as an evaluative aspect. For R. M. Hare, though, this descriptivist aspect concerns only the speaker's meaning when he makes a moral judgment. It does not concern the semantic role of moral terms in referring to some moral property.

However, according to the version of prescriptive realism I have proposed, moral predicates refer to moral properties, such as rightness or wrongness. The proposition that lying is morally wrong asserts that lying has the substantive moral property of being contrary to the will of, and prohibited by, God (or, for nontheists or theists who deny that moral objectivity requires a theistic grounding, some other substantive property). If I believe the proposition that lying is wrong, and/or express such belief, I suggest that I have appropriated that standard of morality for my willing. This is as realist as one should like.

The theoretical advantages of this version of prescriptive realism should be fairly obvious. Firstly, the view captures the intuition that when people make a moral judgment, they really mean to assert it. They take themselves with the judgment to be expressing a genuine proposition, having robust truth conditions. Lying is wrong if lying actually has the property of wrongness. It has this property if the appropriate standard of morality prohibits lying. According to Hare's version of prescriptive realism, the appropriate standard of morality is the divine will for our willing.

Secondly, the view captures the intuition that to make the judgment that lying is wrong is not simply to make a report about what one believes about lying. It is to express disapproval of lying, or to express the acceptance of, or subscription to, a norm or a moral standard that forbids lying. People who make this judgment indicate that they are motivated to some degree to make it a policy to tell the truth. This feature of moral and other types of normative discourse has been thought to be the best evidence in favor of various accounts of antirealist-expressivism. However, normative discourse retains this intuitive feature in prescriptive realism.

## 3. Judgment and Motivation

There are two complications that arise in the course of explaining this second advantage. The advantage amounts to it being the case that

prescriptive realism is able to explain the normative pull of moral judgments. It is able to explain the reliability of the connection between a person's judgment that lying is wrong and that person being motivated in some degree to tell the truth. Antirealist-expressivists typically explain this connection with what has been called the internalist constraint.[8] Motivational internalists argue that there is a necessary connection between moral judgment and motivation. That is, a person who makes a judgment to the effect that lying is wrong is *necessarily* motivated to some degree to avoid lying. It might be that many, if not most, moral theorists who embrace antirealist-expressivism do so because of a prior commitment to motivational internalism.

What about prescriptive realism? How does it explain the connection, and the manifest reliability of the connection, between moral judgments and motivation? As I have described it, prescriptive realism is a kind of expressivism. If expressivism entails motivational internalism, then prescriptive realism is committed to it being conceptually true that when people make moral judgments, and they have some motivation in favor of acting in accordance with the judgment. However, prescriptive realism, as I have described it, is also a kind of substantive moral realism. Substantive moral realists typically reject motivational internalism.[9] They deny that moral judgment strictly entails anything about motivation. Instead, it is an empirical matter of fact that people who make a moral judgment are motivated to act in accordance with it. How is this tension to be resolved?

The answer is that since prescriptive realism, as I have described it, is a kind of moral expressivism, it is committed to it being conceptually true that when people make moral judgments, they express some kind of attitude. The relevant attitude in this version of prescriptive realism is subscription to or endorsement of God's will for our willing. However, it is also a desideratum of this version of prescriptive realism that motivational internalism is false. Satan and other fallen angels, for example, presumably know a good deal about God's commands; however, they are not motivated to act in accordance with them.[10] In fact, they may be oppositely motivated. These two commitments are problematic only if

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[8] See, for example, Stevenson (1963) and Blackburn (1984, 187–89). Michael Smith, not an expressivist, also invokes the internalism constraint, calling it the practicality requirement (1994, 7). He combines this with a cognitivist view of morality. Thomas Nagel and John McDowell also seem to combine conceptual internalism and cognitivism. See Nagel (1970, 29–30) and McDowell (1978, 15–16).

[9] See, for example, Brink (1989, chap. 3). Smith, Nagel, and McDowell, all cognitivists who accept the internalist constraint, are *not* exceptions to this because their accounts of moral rationalism are not committed to substantive moral realism.

[10] These fallen angels, then, raise the amoralist challenge to motivational internalism. See Brink (1989, 46–50).

expressivism entails motivational internalism. However, expressivism does not entail motivational internalism. In order to see this, it is important to understand what it means to express a conative or motivational state of mind.

The fact that, for example, "Lying is wrong" can be used to express some kind of attitude toward lying is a feature of the semantics of the sentence. The fact that in a given context a person who says, "Lying is wrong" has expressed some kind of attitude is a feature of the pragmatics of moral sentences. "Expressed" here is understood in such a way that people can express a mental state that they do not possess. This is because, as William Alston has argued,

> [T]o express an attitude, belief, feeling, or intention, where this is a linguistic act, is [merely] to exploit the rules of language to represent oneself as having the attitude. It is to utter a certain sentence in circumstances such that the utterance of that sentence in circumstances of that kind is subject to a rule requiring the utterer to have a certain attitude [1968, 7].[11]

Consider utterances of apologies, pejoratives, and promises.[12] Say that according to the right account of apologies, when one says "I apologize" to the appropriate person in the appropriate context, one necessarily expresses one's regret to another. Is one who endorses this account of apologies necessarily committed to "regret internalism," the idea that it is conceptually true that when people apologize, they regret the thing for which they are apologizing? No, because one who makes an insincere apology has expressed regret and has succeeded in apologizing if he has uttered "I apologize" to the appropriate person in the appropriate context, even if he feels no regret. Similarly, say pejoratives necessarily express contempt and promises necessarily express intentions. This account of pejoratives should not be thought to entail "contempt internalism" and the account of promises should not be thought to entail "intention internalism." One may call another a moron, thereby expressing contempt for him, without actually having contempt for him. One may be joking. And one may promise another his help, thereby expressing his intention to help, without actually intending anything of the sort. One may be lying.

These cases suggest that what it means to express a conative or motivational state of mind does not refer to a relationship between the speaker and his states of mind. Instead, it refers to a relationship between the speaker and his audience within the context of established

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[11] Alston had developed this view of "express" in Alston (1965).

[12] These examples are used in Copp (2001) and Joyce (2002). For more on promising, see Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Grice (1989).

linguistic conventions governing the use of the relevant terms.[13] It is according to these linguistic conventions that when one, for example, says "I apologize" to the appropriate person in the appropriate context, one necessarily expresses one's regret to another whether or not he actually feels the emotion. One can express a feeling, intention, or attitude without having it because to engage in the speech act of expressing some conative state of mind is simply to take advantage of rules of language in such a way as to represent oneself as having that conative state of mind.

According to the version of prescriptive realism I have presented, it is conceptually true that when one makes a moral judgment, say, that lying is wrong, one expresses his subscription to a moral standard that forbids lying. This does not entail motivational internalism. That is, this thesis does not mean that the speaker actually does subscribe to that standard. It does, however, entail a thesis similar to motivational internalism. It entails that, given the conventions that govern the use of moral terms, it is conceptually true that when people make moral judgments, they indicate, or communicate, or imply that they have some motivation in favor of acting in accordance with the judgment.[14]

So according to my version of prescriptive realism, when one asserts that lying is wrong, one (1) expresses the belief that lying possesses the moral property "wrongness," which is a substantive property defined in terms of God's commands, and (2) expresses subscription to a moral standard, God's will, that forbids lying. (1) commits this version of prescriptive realism to substantive moral realism. It allows prescriptive realism to capture the key metaethical intuition concerning the objectivity of moral judgments. (2) commits the view to moral expressivism. It allows the view to capture the other key metaethical intuition concerning the role of human affect in moral judgments and the normativity of moral judgments. This is because (2) commits prescriptive realism to the idea that when someone makes a moral judgment like "lying is wrong," then, because of linguistic conventions that govern the use of "wrong," the speaker indicates or implies that he is motivated to some degree to make it a policy to tell the truth (but he may not be so motivated). This captures the manifest reliability of the connection between moral judgment and moral motivation, but that connection is empirical, not conceptual.

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[13] Copp calls these linguistic conventions "expressive conventions" in Copp (2001, 20). Also, see Joyce (2002, 338).

[14] An alternative way of putting this point is that when people *sincerely* make moral judgments, they necessarily have some motivation in favor of acting in accordance with those judgments. Some proponents of motivational internalism think the sincerity condition should be built into the statement of the view in this way. Whether this view is true or not seems to depend, in part, on what is required of a moral judgment for it to be sincere.

This analysis I have presented focuses primarily on moral judgment as an illocutionary act. However, the analysis applies to people when they have moral thoughts, as well as when they express them. So when one thinks that lying is wrong, one (1) has the belief that lying possesses the substantive moral property "wrongness" and (2) is in a conative or orectic state of mind, which consists in an attitude of acceptance or endorsement of God's willing that people not lie. This is what is involved in judging that lying is wrong, even if one never makes this the object of one's assertion. When we move from expressions of judgments to the judgments themselves, the first complication I have been considering should never come up. The issue concerning the connection between moral expressivism and motivational internalism only arises in cases where "making a moral judgment" names a kind of speech act.

There might be a second complication. If it is true in the case where "making a moral judgment" names a kind of speech act that moral expressivism does not entail motivational internalism, it now might be difficult to see how to separate prescriptive realists from more typical (and avowedly antiexpressivist) moral realists. These moral realists might happily endorse the view that there is an implication of motivation that gets carried with moral judgments. "If that is what you mean by expressivism," they might say, "then I am an expressivist, too." In that case, prescriptive realism, as a general metaethical view, is indistinguishable from typical moral realist views. It offers no advantage as compared with such views in capturing the intuition about the normative aspect of moral judgments, the aspect according to which moral judgments exert a kind of normative pull.

I think this complaint mistakenly assumes that I have attempted to provide an alternative understanding of expressivism. That was not the point at all. Actually, I say people necessarily do just what expressivists say they necessarily do when they make moral judgments; they express emotion or subscription to a moral standard or acceptance of norms that prescribe guilt or any other of an assortment of attitudes. The difference is that, against typical antirealist expressivists, I argue that this idea about what people do when they make moral judgments entails neither noncognitivism nor motivational internalism. The preceding argument concerning the internalism constraint was not that expressivism should be reconceived along the lines that, because of the linguistic conventions that govern the use of moral terms, there is an implication of motivation that gets carried with moral judgments. It was that this is all the expressivist view about the function of moral terms is committed to concerning the connection between moral judgments and the motivation to act in certain ways. Since this is all expressivism is committed to concerning this question, it is compatible with externalism.

Typical moral realists might, for all that, still resist the account I offer. The typical moral realist views from which I am concerned to distinguish prescriptive realism reject expressivism. It might be difficult to say how strong this rejection is intended to be. This is because typical moral realists understand expressivism to entail noncognitivism and they understand both of these theses to entail motivational internalism (see Brink 1989, 83). So when typical moral realists reject expressivism, they may only be intending to reject motivational internalism and noncognitivism. They may only be saying that people's moral judgments do not strictly entail motivation and that moral judgments have robust truth conditions. If this is all they are committed to, then my version of prescriptive realism is not adequately distinguished from them. Typical moral realists might happily accept an understanding of expressivism that entails neither noncognitivism nor motivational internalism.

However, I think most moral realists will not accept this. The understanding of expressivism I have endorsed is that it is conceptually true that when people make moral judgments, they express any of an assortment of attitudes. One of the arguments typical moral realists make against noncognitivism is that the theory is unable to account for the form and content of moral judgments by treating them as expressions of attitude. They claim that expressing some moral attitude is not a necessary function moral judgments serve. This is to deny the central positive thesis of antirealist-expressivism. If they deny that thesis, they are not just committed to rejecting antirealist versions of moral expressivism; they are committed to rejecting moral expressivism *simpliciter*, and therefore, the metaethical account I am offering.

Certain moral realists might say, "I am an expressivist, too." This is part of what embracing prescriptive realism involves. Moral realists who reject moral expressivism because they believe it is incompatible with their realism should rethink the issue in the way I have suggested. However, typical moral realists, inasmuch as they deny that moral judgments necessarily express some kind of attitude, implicate prescriptive realism as much as they implicate antirealist expressivism. Prescriptive realism, along the lines I am pursuing it, is therefore distinguishable from typical moral realist views. It is a kind of expressivism.

## 4. Conclusion

The strengthened version of Hare's prescriptive realism is a viable and attractive option in metaethics. I do not think Hare or anyone else would make concessions to moral antirealism if substantive moral realism were metaphysically plausible and could neatly capture the normativity of moral judgments. The prescriptive-realist option provides the resources for devising an account where this is the case. That account need not point to the divine voluntarist property of being willed

by God. In fact, the brand of moral objectivity that figures in the view might disavow any theistic grounding. However, given the various commitments of theists regarding moral thought and discourse, specifically, the supernatural basis for moral objectivity and the role of human affect in moral judgments, prescriptive realism seems specially suited for them.

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