CHANGES OF MIND:
BELIEFS AND VALUE JUDGMENTS*

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Abstract: In this paper I argue that the way in which we revise and change our beliefs is different from that in which we revise and change our judgments of value; this is due to the fact that judgments of value, unlike beliefs, have no truth-values. Changes of judgments of value do not answer in the same way to the restrictions that apply to changes of beliefs and that are determined by the norms that govern beliefs. I argue that, first when we revise and change our beliefs, we should be in a position to suspend judgments, and when trying to remove doubts, we should try to avoid falsehood and, second when changing beliefs, we should be in a position to assign probabilities to those conjectures we are in suspense about. These two conditions apply to the case of changes of attitudes with truth-values, such as beliefs; I argue that these two characteristics do not apply to cases of changes of judgments of value.

Key-words: Value judgments. Belief. Belief revision. Moral dilemmas. Value conflict.

In this paper I want to argue that the way in which we revise and change our value judgments is different from that in which we revise and change our beliefs: it is not possible to explain both processes in the same way or by assuming that value judgments are forms of beliefs. If value judgments were beliefs they would have to be revised and changed in the same way as we do with beliefs. I plan to argue as follows: in the first section, I shall present some elements of a model of belief revision, along with what I take to be some of the main characteristics and normative constraints of beliefs, which are useful for explaining the way in which we change our beliefs. I shall also present an example of a case of change of mind due to a conflict of inconsistent beliefs. This I do in order to contrast it, in the second section, with a case of revision and change of value judgments due to value conflict, more precisely to inconsistent value judgments, represented in the form of conflicting moral obligations—the case of a moral dilemma. By contrasting changes of beliefs and changes of value judgments, we can see that these processes respond in different ways to normative dynamics in situations of revision and change; this is due to the different way in which they respond to constraints imposed on them by the concept of truth. I want to focus on two such constraints, which have special relevance in the case of belief revision: first, when revising our beliefs, we should be in a position to suspend judgment, and when trying to remove doubt from such a position of suspense we should be able to be concerned with the avoidance of error or falsity, since we cannot believe something that we take to be false, and we should coherently have a concern not to import false beliefs into our corpus of beliefs. Second, prior to changing our beliefs, we should be in a position to assign intervals of probability to the conjectures between which we are in suspense. These are two conditions that apply to cases in which we change truth-value-bearing attitudes, such as beliefs; however, it is my contention that they do not apply to value judgments.

We can discover something important about our beliefs and about other mental states, something overlooked or neglected in accounts of the nature of mental states, by examining the dynamics of thinking represented in what we call changes of mind. We can see more clearly what does and does not count as a belief by seeing what does and does not count as a change of mind or a rational change of beliefs: by seeing the constraints to which beliefs and other mental states are subject when we change our minds.

My approach to this issue is tentative, though; it would need more than these few pages to be fully worked out. Also, the argument that I am going to present here follows the main arguments that Isaac Levi has offered for the separability of belief and value judgments in the context of his theory of inquiry and belief revision. A more detailed account of this issue, which would require many more technicisms of belief revision theory than I am able to present here, can be found scattered throughout his writings.[1] Ultimately, what I want to do is to import some arguments that we can find in the field of belief revision to the discussion about cognitivism of value judgments, leaving aside most of the technicisms in which they are usually couched. Then I try to develop an argument, different from those we find in the literature, and particularly different from those of Bernard Williams, for the distinction between value conflicts and conflicts of belief. These I take to be the main contributions of the paper.

The theory of changes of view through inquiry developed by Levi can be traced to the classical pragmatists Charles S. Peirce and John Dewey—although taking into account that neither of them agreed, among other things, on a theory of truth. This theory of changes of view through inquiry has been called the "belief-doubt model of inquiry".[2] It

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[1] For a more detailed account of these arguments, see Levi (1986, 1998, 2002, and unpublished).

[2] For a general account of the belief-doubt model, as well as more on how Levi develops the pragmatist position, see Olsson (2006).

gives us an account of how we change our views based on a distinction between what is settled and what is doubtful. The basis on which this distinction is made can be extended to different mental states, among which we can count judgments of value. Levi contrasts the way in which conflicts of value can lead to other kinds of changes of view through inquiry than the ones in which truth-value bearing states are at stake. In the following pages I am going to present some of these arguments for the differentiation between the way we change our beliefs and that in which we change our evaluations, along with some basic notions of belief revision.[3]

1. ON BELIEFS AND CHANGES OF BELIEFS

Two aspects of the nature of beliefs are involved when discussing the difference between beliefs and other mental attitudes. First, truth and falsehood are the normative standards of assessment of beliefs, and these standards distinguish beliefs from other mental states. It does not make much sense to speak of desires, emotions, intentions, doubts, dreams or fantasies as being true or false, since these are standards or norms that apply only to beliefs—even if we find that those other attitudes presuppose beliefs, and that what we desire or intend has some cognitive antecedent on beliefs that are either true or false. Now, whenever I talk about beliefs, I am referring to *full beliefs* (or to what are sometimes called "dogmatic beliefs"), that is, beliefs that express certainty about the truth or falsity of a proposition (beliefs with assignments of probability of 1 or 0). "Beliefs" that express some degree of uncertainty—what others take as degrees of belief with determinate assignments of probability—I regard as probability judgments, and as we will see, there are reasons for taking these as different from full beliefs. For now, following the belief-doubt

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[3] For a more detailed view of the field, see Levi (1980), Gärdenfors (1988), and Harman (1986).

model of inquiry, let me just say that I take these judgments as implying a certain degree of doubt about the truth or falsity of a proposition, as a form of postponement of opinion, or an abstention from accepting as certain the truth of a given statement. Full beliefs do not presuppose doubt but full confidence in the truth or falsity of the proposition believed, as opposed to cases of judgments of probability that precisely presuppose some degree of uncertainty. Beliefs, then, are an all-or-nothing matter.

Second, what is believed, even if it happens to be false, is always taken to be true by the person who holds the belief. To believe that p is to believe that p is true, even if p turns out to be false. Beliefs aim at truth, and to believe p is to believe that p is true. I take it that this is a philosophical truism. Believing implies believing the truth of the proposition at stake, which is incompatible with the assertion of its falsity. To say something like "I believe that it rains, but it doesn't rain", as G.E. Moore claimed, is paradoxical. Now, if somebody recognizes that what she has believed up to that point is false, she is at a turning point for changing her mind. She thereby abandons the false belief and adopts the new belief that she takes to be true, or suspends judgment, in which case she believes that hypothesis h is either true or false, and remains in doubt. Each one of her beliefs is taken to be true and, when adding new beliefs to this corpus, the agent should be concerned with not importing falsities or error, in a way that takes into account the truth of the beliefs she already holds. When adding new beliefs to our corpus of beliefs, this corpus is regarded as true and as consistent, so when importing new beliefs, the agent should do so in a manner that preserves the consistency of that corpus. She should not introduce as true information that contradicts elements in her set of beliefs (cf. Levi, 1980, chap. 1). This, evidently, does not happen when she adopts, say, a new desire since these attitudes are not subject to a requirement of consistency. But let's not rush, the picture is more complicated than this. Let me pause on some basic notions about how we change beliefs.

My concern here is with how we change beliefs, that is, with how we lead processes of inquiry from doubt to a settled judgment: where there is no serious doubt concerning the truth of a believed proposition, there is no inquiry. Following the classical pragmatists, we can say that justification of belief is required only when an inquirer is seeking to answer an unsettled question or change a belief. According to pragmatists, there is no obligation from the part of the inquirer in justifying currently held beliefs if there are no special reasons for questioning such beliefs. Justification is required for changing one's point of view and not for one's current beliefs; so we have to differentiate between the role of truth in current beliefs and the role of truth in contemplating changes of beliefs. Following this position, here I am concerned only with the latter, since I want to analyze the dynamics of epistemic states, and contrast how we change beliefs and value judgments.

Perhaps an example might help to see some of the main characteristics of a process of belief revision. Let's imagine the case of Derek, a CIA agent who has been accused of treason and double-espionage. However, his boss, Chris, believes that Derek is innocent: he has known him for a long time and knows that he is a trustworthy and decent person. But Chris is pre-committed to accept the result of a certain routine, for instance, the result of reading a certain report about Derek's conduct—a report about evidence incriminating his subordinate. However, if it were not because of this pre-commitment, the previously held belief in ~p would have precluded that Chris incorporated also p in his corpus of beliefs. So he holds contradictory beliefs about the innocence of his subordinate. He inadvertently expands into inconsistency and needs to retreat from inconsistency into suspense. He has believed p and ~p at the same time and, once he realizes that, he should pause, suspend judgment about the truth-values of the conflicting beliefs and get into a process of inquiry through which he is going to balance the content of his contradictory beliefs, and get a settled opinion about this matter. Being in a situation of uncertainty like this one creates some discomfort in Chris, as

these kinds of doubts sometimes do. Moreover, while getting into an inquiry that would lead him to find out the truth and have a settled opinion about this issue, he is in a position of assigning intervals of probability to the conjectures between which he is in suspense. He can determine how much more probable it is that his subordinate is guilty rather than innocent or vice versa, *i.e.*, he can determine how probable each hypothesis is and quantify over his uncertainties.[4]

Now, when Chris faces contradictory beliefs, he is in a situation in which he should change his mind. But he does not have to change all of it, just the relevant beliefs that are in conflict, and perhaps some other beliefs that are related to them. The passage from doubt to certainty or belief is not one in which one has to question any more beliefs than those that seem to be strictly necessary to make up one's mind. In cases of inconsistency like Chris's, one has to retreat, but trying to save as much of his previous beliefs as possible; he does not have to retreat from all his other beliefs, but just from the particular one that is in conflict and perhaps from some other beliefs that are somehow related to it.[5] There

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[4] My example illustrates a case of a conflict due to contradictory beliefs. I do not think that it is only through contradictions that we revise and change beliefs, but this gives us a good case for what I want to argue here. Also, would it be possible to be in a position in which one is unable to assign any probability whatsoever to the conflicting beliefs, being simply lost in doubt? I don't think so, since even if one were lost in doubt between different rankings, one would be able to assign different probabilities to the beliefs in conflict.

[5] This may lead to what is called the problem of "epistemic hell" of inconsistent sets. What in fact follows from $p \& \sim p$ is not only some consequences, but the totality of sentences in a language. Then, once a contradiction enters into a set of beliefs, it is not enough to take out, for instance, p along with the consequences of p exclusively. There are many ways of getting out of the problem (encapsulating the contradiction, for instance), but this is complicated to explain here and goes beyond the intentions of this paper. For more on this problem, see Olsson (2003). Here, as in many other places, I am indebted to Eleonora Cresto for pointing out this problem to me.

are no special reasons for rejecting other beliefs, so he is justified in continuing to accept them; which is another way of saying that "when changing beliefs in response to new evidence, you should continue to believe as many of the old beliefs as possible".[6] This has been called a principle of conservatism in the revision of beliefs.

In this simple case we can identify some of the main norms that apply to changes of belief. First of all, when contradictions appear in our set of beliefs, and we are aware of this, this should lead to a suspension of judgment about the truth of the conflicting claims. This suspension of judgment or doubt about the truth of the claims calls for settlement; this can be achieved through inquiry, an inquiry that aims at truth. Truth is a goal of inquiry when epistemic judgments are in suspense. Truth played an important role in the way Chris changed his beliefs. These beliefs were a matter of truth and falsity, and the alternative he faced was between truth-value-bearing hypotheses. If he finally comes to realize that his belief that Derek was innocent was caused, say, by his esteem for his subordinate, and that his belief is false, then he would have to drop it because it contradicted the rest of his beliefs based on the evidence incriminating Derek. Now he knows that that was a false belief and that it had to be rejected. The belief that replaced it had to face the same constraint: it could not contradict other accepted elements in his set of beliefs, since there is a concern to avoid falsity. Finally, while suspending judgment about the truth of the conflicting beliefs, he was in a position to assign intervals of probability to the competing alternatives, which is something that can only be done in the case of truth-value-bearing attitudes. He was able to see how much more likely was one hypothesis over the other. To sum up, this example shows us that there is a requirement

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[6] Gärdenfors (1988, p. 67). According to Gärdenfors, the principle comes from Harman (1986, p. 46), however the idea of "minimal mutilation" was already embedded in the AGM (Alchourrón-Gärdenfors-Makinson) program, which is prior to Harman's book.

that if one has truth-value-bearing propositions, one should be in a position to suspend judgment about the truth of the conflicting alternatives, and when suspending judgment, one should be concerned with the avoidance of error, one should be concerned with not importing false beliefs into one's corpus of beliefs. One should also be in a position to assign probabilities and measure one's uncertainties. All these are demands that apply to changes of beliefs. Let's now contrast this with value judgments.

2. ON VALUE CONFLICTS

I have been talking about changes of mind due to conflicting beliefs. Now I want to compare these cases with those of changes of value judgments and see whether the demands that apply to changes of beliefs also apply to these other changes. I talked before about cases of contradictory beliefs, an equivalent case for value judgments would be the case of value conflicts, that is, cases in which we hold evaluations that get into conflict, and we have to retreat, revise our values, and make up our minds, usually given that we are pressed to take a decision and act.

Some warning is in order here: where I talk about value judgments, others prefer to talk about normative judgments, which is also a proper name for the kind of judgments that I am talking about here. They may be taken as synonyms. I have preferred to talk in terms of value judgments because talking about normative judgments may lead, in the context of this paper, to some confusion when talking about the normativity that governs beliefs, other judgments and their revision and change. However, normative or value judgments may take two forms: evaluative judgments proper (in which we use terms such as "good", "bad", etc.) and deontic judgments (in which we use terms such as "right", "wrong", "duty", "obligation", "ought", etc.). The fact that I talk about value judgments should not make us lose sight of this ambiva-

lence. In what follows I am going to play with these two forms of value or normative judgments.[7]

Since I want to contrast changes of beliefs and value judgments in cases of conflicts, let me start by characterizing the kinds of value conflict that we can find, particularly in the case of moral struggle. To be sure, moral conflicts are not the only kind of conflicts in values that we can find, even if we are led to think so by most of the literature on the subject. Moral values are just one among a plurality of other kinds of values that we find in everyday life: economic, prudential, legal, political, religious, sentimental, aesthetic values have to be taken into account as well. The boundaries between these are not always clear, and they do not always get into conflict with values of the same kind, but we frequently have to face situations in which our moral values get into conflict with, say, prudential or political values. I do not think that any of these can always be reduced to any other kind of value nor that one kind of value in particular takes primacy over the rest, but this is something I am not going to argue here; I just want to point out the plurality of values that we may find. My discussion here is going to presuppose a form of value pluralism in which there is a plurality of equally genuine values that give rise to equally authentic conflicts of values and moral dilemmas. However, counter to what Kantians, utilitarians, and others would insist, I follow the position of value pluralists such as John Dewey, for whom there is no single standard of value, and for whom the existence of genuine moral dilemmas has to be accepted.[8] Because of the diversity of

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[7] Also, the present discussion does not require a distinction between different kinds of obligations, such as categorical and conditional moral obligations.

[8] For a finer characterization of value pluralism, see Larmore (1996) and Rescher (1993); and the *loci classici*, Berlin (1991); and Williams (1981). On this point, Berlin and Williams are at one with Dewey. However, they do not endorse a pluralist position quite like Dewey's, since for them conflicts of values are not an occasion for any kind of inquiry, as they are for Dewey.

values, agents are bound to find themselves in genuine conflicts that may occasion reflection and inquiry. While confronting such situations, agents may have to take decisions concerning how to act—sometimes they will reach a satisfactory resolution to the conflict through inquiry, but some other times they may be pressed to act without solving the conflict.

Nevertheless, I shall focus on moral conflicts because they illustrate very well the difference that I want to stress, and also because they usually press us to decide and act in a way that other values do not—and not because they have any privileged status among values. Yet it is my contention that many of the things I say about moral values and conflicts can be generalized to other kinds of values. Ultimately, moral judgments are just a subset of the set of value judgments.

Now, we have to distinguish between two kinds of moral conflict: first, struggles against temptation, or more generally, cases of weakness of the will. The conflict for the agent consists in doing what she knows she ought to do all things considered when there is some temptation, desire, illness, exhaustion, sadness or habit that inclines her in another direction. In this case no moral reflection is necessary in order to find out what one ought to do. This is already clear, but what is needed is just strength of will or determination to do it, and to overcome the temptation or any other factor that may prevent us from acting. Therapy, self-help philosophy, the assistance of some friend or some form of pre-commitment may help, not inquiry. The second kind of cases that we find are cases in which one is undecided as to what one ought to do, due to a conflict of values. This second kind of moral conflict is more relevant for our purposes: it is the case in which an agent is undecided about what she ought to do. This case requires inquiry, not therapy or strength of will. When this inquiry is brought to a conclusion, then it should be clear what one ought to do, all things considered. Sometimes the inquiry tells us what to do even if the conflict remains unresolved. Recent literature on the subject calls these cases moral dilemmas.

3. MORAL DILEMMAS AND CHANGES OF VALUE JUDGMENTS

The classic case of moral dilemmas is the case of conflicting obligations, that is, that situation in which someone is required to, or ought to, do each of two actions, *A* and *B,* but the agent cannot do both, either because *B* is just not doing *A* or because some contingent event in the world prevents him from doing both. Moral dilemmas may also take the form of a conflict in which one ought to do *A*, but at the same time ought not to do *A*. The agent seems condemned to moral failure; regardless of what he does, he will do something wrong or fail to do something that she ought to do, that is, he can only comply with one obligation, not with both of them. We can find examples of this kind of dilemma in literature, especially in Greek tragedies: the cases of Antigone and Agamemnon are classic illustrations of it. But let me take as an example the classic case given by Jean-Paul Sartre, who described a moral dilemma in which a student, whose brother had been killed in the German offensive of 1940, wants to avenge his brother by joining the Free French Forces in England and fighting forces that he regard as evil. But this man's mother is living with him, and he is her one consolation in life; his disappearance would plunge her into despair. He thinks that he has conflicting obligations. Sartre describes him as being torn between two kinds of morality: one of limited scope but sure on effect, personal devotion to his mother; the other of much wider scope but uncertain effect "which might vanish like water into sand and serve no purpose", attempting to contribute to the defeat of an unjust aggressor (Sartre 1957, p. 296).

If evaluative judgments were beliefs, then holding both judgments, that he ought and he ought not do something, would create a contradiction in the same way in which I characterized a contradiction in the case of full beliefs. That is, if the student judged that he ought to stay with his mother, and he took this as a true belief, and judged that he ought not to join the French Forces in England, and he took this as a

true belief as well, then there would be a contradiction in his set of beliefs, just as in the example I gave before. In the face of this conflict, and realizing that his beliefs contradict each other, our student should also realize that he has expanded into inconsistency, that he holds inconsistent beliefs, and that the two of them cannot be true at the same time. This is what makes the situation a conflict. And, as in the case of beliefs, one of them must be false and should be discarded. One of the obligations must be false. This man should be able to retreat into a suspension of judgment, that is, he should be able to suspend judgment about the truth of the conflicting beliefs, and then get into a process of inquiry (that is precisely part of what he does by getting the advice of his professor) that should have the ideal outcome of showing which one of the two conflicting beliefs is true and which one false. The false one would then be discarded in the same way one discards false beliefs when one discovers the truth. That is, this man should realize that the obligation which he finally took as false was not a real obligation or, perhaps, an obligation that did not really apply to him. Furthermore, this man should be in a position to assign probabilities to his two conflicting beliefs about his obligations, and see which one is more likely to be true. In sum, the process of inquiry in this case would have to have the same characteristics that the process had in my previous case of inconsistent beliefs. This, I guess, is more or less the description that those who think that value judgments are beliefs would have to maintain. This is the picture I want to criticize.

My contention here is that in a conflict of evaluative judgments, these do not respond to the same constraints that apply to beliefs in the same way they do in a situation of revision and change.

There is a criticism already available of the view that identifies beliefs and value judgments that may be useful for my purposes of showing the difference between these two states. This is the position held by Bernard Williams in his "Ethical Consistency". Williams also contrasts cases of conflict in beliefs with conflicts of obligations, claiming that the

latter are different from the former, and that evaluative judgments are not beliefs. Even though my final conclusion is similar to that of Williams, his strategy has some consequences in terms of consistency that we may not want to buy. However, I think it is interesting to see how he puts the difference between beliefs and value judgments. I want to present it because it is illustrative of some of these differences; then I will take distance from it, presenting where I think the difference should be stressed. I shall summarize briefly some of Williams's main ideas on this issue.

Williams claims that conflicts of values resemble more conflicts of desire than conflicts of belief, because, unlike belief, inconsistent value judgments are not weakened by discovering that they conflict: "The discovery that my factual beliefs conflict *eo ipso* tends to weaken one or more of the beliefs; not so, with desires; not so, I think, with one's conflicting convictions about what one ought to do" (Williams, 1973a, p. 172; see also 1973b). Conflicts of moral convictions, says Williams, like conflicts of desires, have the character of a struggle where one maintains both convictions at the same time without weakening any of them; the case of conflicting beliefs is not like that, since one of our conflicting beliefs tends to weaken, and would have the ideal outcome of making us drop the false belief. The belief that is taken to be false is abandoned and one is just going to keep the belief that one takes to be true. This does not happen with desires, and it does not seem to happen either with conflicting moral obligations. When one faces a case of conflicting desires, this is not a reason for weakening and abandoning one of the conflicting desires, claims Williams; one can continue holding those desires until the moment of decision and action comes and one has to act on one desire, discarding the other one.[9] But even in this case one can con-

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[9] Williams does not distinguish between kinds of desires, nor does he say anything about cases where a desire may weaken and even disappear due to the conflict.

tinue holding the rejected desire, if it does not get transfigured into a feeling of regret or guilt. This is another difference with beliefs: both in the case of desires and in that of conflicting obligations, there may be a remnant in the form of regret or guilt, whereas in the case of beliefs there seems to be no such remnant once a false belief is dropped. The case of conflicting obligations looks more like a conflict of desires than like a conflict of beliefs, Williams says. When one discovers that two evaluative convictions conflict, that is, that two convictions about what one ought to do conflict, this is not a reason for weakening one and, ultimately, taking it as false and abandoning it. We should not hold inconsistent beliefs, says Williams, since this situation is untenable, but when it comes to evaluative matters inconsistency seems to be fine: we can hold inconsistent value judgments. Two elements in our set of value judgments are inconsistent because the obligation of doing *A* precludes us from doing *B*, and doing *B* would amount to the negation of *A* and vice versa. Williams claims that this inconsistency can be perfectly maintained without weakening any of the agent's convictions, that is to say, unlike the case of epistemic consistency, the agent can maintain this inconsistency with no problem.

Even though I agree with the spirit of his criticism to the identification of beliefs and value judgments, I want to take some distance from Williams's way of seeing moral dilemmas as cases of inconsistency. One of the reasons why many authors have rejected the idea of moral dilemmas is because they think that if we hold that a theory allows for these dilemmas, then there is some sense in which this theory is incoherent or inconsistent. If we accept the existence of genuine moral dilemmas, then we have to give up on consistency, they claim. Williams seems to tell us that whereas consistency is the first virtue of a theory that purports to describe and explain how things stand, in response to moral dilemmas the inconsistency of thinking both that you ought to do incompatible actions and that you cannot do both of them is excusable. Actually, it seems to be a virtue, since not to think both things would seem to be

insensitive. I think that, contrary to what Williams claims, we should try to save ethical consistency while acknowledging the existence of real moral dilemmas.[10]

Allowing for inconsistency in valuations also means giving up many things that hang on evaluative consistency, not only the consistency of our theory, but also such things as coherence or impartiality, among the most important ones. If we accept incompatible evaluations, or if we accept an evaluation without accepting its logical consequences, then there would be all kinds of exceptions to the way we judge or behave. Inconsistency has also consequences for impartiality, which means that we make similar evaluations about similar actions, regardless of the individuals involved. I violate a requirement of impartiality if I make conflicting evaluations about actions that I regard as exactly or relevantly similar. This is why consistency matters, and why we should not give it up in our theory.[11]

However, whereas for Williams the difference between beliefs and value judgments lies mainly in a difference of consistency, my contention is that it lies in the different way we revise and change our judgments.

Let me first introduce some further distinctions—not made by Williams. He identifies conflicts of obligations with inconsistencies—and we might extend his thesis to conflicts of values, more generally—but here we should distinguish between two different kinds of conflicts: those that may involve inconsistencies, and those, generated by those inconsistencies, that are rather cases of suspension of judgment, which

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[10] Some authors, such as Ruth Barcan Marcus, take the different strategy of acknowledging the existence of genuine moral dilemmas, but claiming that this "need not and usually does not signify that there is some inconsistency… in the set of principles, duties, and other moral directives under which we define our obligations either individually or socially" (1987, p. 188).

[11] For more on ethical consistency, and on why it is so important for moral reasoning, see Gensler (1998, chap. 7).

Williams overlooks, cases where one is "of two minds", undecided as to which option to embrace or what to do. Thus, one should distinguish between two senses of conflict here: inconsistency and doubt. A conflict of values like the one Sartre's student faces when he is torn between the option of staying with his mother or joining the French Forces involves yes, in a first moment, an inconsistency, but much more characteristically, a doubt about the competing convictions, a doubt about how to proceed. This is a conflict because it is an indeterminate situation in which the agent finds himself troubled, ambiguous, or confused as to what to do. These conflicts should lead to suspension of judgment, but these cases of suspension are different from those of belief, as we'll see.

Distinguishing these two kinds of conflicts allows us to see that inconsistencies may, and should, lead to a suspension of judgment and, if pressed to decide, to a process of inquiry that would tend to resolve the conflict, or at least to decide what to do, even if the conflict remains unresolved.[12] By excusing inconsistency, and ignoring the other kind of conflict, Williams also overlooks the possibility of inquiry. John Dewey held a similar value pluralism as that maintained by Williams, and also admitted the possibility of conflicts of values. However, for Dewey, when we recognize conflicts of value judgments, inconsistency is not

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[12] Carlos Alchourrón also takes an approach in which normative sentences lack truth-values, but he warns us about the possible consequences in terms of consistency that this may have: "if normative sentences lack truth-values, then the notion of normative consistency (or inconsistency) turns out to be problematic, for we cannot use, at least in a direct way, the standard semantic notion of a consistent set of sentences, which essentially involves the notion of truth: a set is consistent if, and only if, it admits at least an interpretation in which all its elements are true", he says. However, he proposes an interpretation according to which normative conflicts are only due to a certain kind of normative inconsistency (conditional inconsistency, through certain facts), and in which the only way of overcoming these conflicts is through the revision of the system of norms that generates these conflicts. See Alchourrón (1991, p. 292).

acceptable, contrary to what Williams suggests. The conflict of values generates an indeterminate situation that calls for a process of inquiry that would transform this situation into a determinate one in which a way of acting should become clear. This indeterminate situation, thus, is a good opportunity for inquiry—in a very similar way as the kind of inquiry that he favored in the belief-doubt model of inquiry that he adopted from Peirce.[13] Being in a moral dilemma and knowing that one has conflicting convictions that cannot be satisfied is not a situation that should leave us in an impasse if we have to act—as in the case of Buridan's ass. Most of the time, when we are pressed to act, this impasse has to be avoided, and some inquiry has to be done in order to overcome it. Conflicting convictions ask for settlement, and this can be attained, says Dewey, through inquiry. "Reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value; it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful" (1910, p. 13). This is why suspension of judgment calls for settlement. Doubt as to what to do is a form of conflict that brings about a struggle to attain a new determinate situation. Without this situation of doubt and conflict there would not be any need of inquiry.

Moving to a position of suspense is the first move in order to eliminate the conflict—in the sense of removing incoherence or generalized inconsistency. It is the beginning of the inquiry; and it is in the process of inquiry where we are going to find the difference between changes of value judgments and changes of beliefs, and not in a conflict of consistency, as Williams suggests.

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[13] Cf. Dewey and Tufts (1932, chap. X). For a development of this topic along Deweyan lines, see Levi (1997).

However, we have to be careful with the issue of suspension of judgment. From a certain perspective, suspension of judgment in the case of evaluations is not even possible. According to Levi, if value judgments were full beliefs, we would have to take a stance about the conflicted attitudes, making it impossible to suspend judgment, and marking a distinction between changes of value judgments and changes of beliefs. The argument goes like this and it works in the same way for judgments of possibility, probability and value. Although he formulates it for cases of probability and possibility, let me present it here just for the case of value judgments. We can call it the argument of value as full belief.[14]

If inquiring agents could be coherently concerned to avoid error in changing judgments of value, we would have to represent these judgments as full beliefs. In that case, we could characterize doubt or suspense of judgment with respect to value in the same way as we do with respect to full belief. Only then would it be coherent to consider avoidance of error as a desideratum in inquiry. Let's consider, for example, the case where an agent X judges something as valuable. Whether X's utterance "A is better than B" expresses a full belief or not, it actually express an attitude: that of judging that A is better than B.[15] (The same works for conflicting obligations, where we judge acting on one obligation as better than acting on the other one.) If the utterance is a truth-value bearing assertion, this attitude must somehow be seen to be the same attitude as a full belief. Valuing implies a comparison of alternatives, and

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[14] Different versions of this argument appear scattered in various places in Levi's work. See Levi (1984, pp. 154 ff; 1996, p. 57; and unpublished).

[15] Showing that such judgments are expressed in an assertoric mood cannot settle whether value judgments are judgments of truth. An utterance could be called an assertion, but it is truth-value bearing if, and only if, it expresses a potential full belief. My concern here is not with the linguistic expression of value judgments, but with their nature as mental states.

it implies reference to things we value more, less, or equally than others. If value judgments were taken as full beliefs, then the following conditions must hold:

1) *A* is better than *B* according to *X* iff *X* fully believes that *A* is objectively better than *B*.
2) ~ {*A* is better than *B* according to *X*} iff *X* fully believes that it is not the case that *A* is objectively better than *B*.
3) *A* is as valuable as *B* according to *X* iff *X* fully believes that *A* is objectively equal to *B*.

X fully believes that *A* is better than *B*, *X* fully believes that it is not the case that *A* is better than *B*, *X* fully believes that *A* is as valuable as *B* or *X* is in suspense. This covers all the possible cases where value judgments represent potential states of full belief. *X* must be opinionated about these matters. If he is opinionated about a proposition he must either believe it or believe its negation. If *A* is better than *B* according to *X* then he fully believes that; if, according to him, it is not the case that *A* is better than *B*, then he fully believes that; if *A* is as valuable as *B*, according to him, then he fully believes so; but he cannot suspend judgment about the truth of these options, because in each case he fully believes each of the propositions. When one is faced with evaluations one must take a stance in one camp or the other; there is no way to suspend judgment.

The argument of value judgments as full beliefs bans suspension of judgment with regard to their truth, which characterizes full beliefs. Giving up the equation of these two attitudes means giving up the idea that value judgments carry truth-values and, therefore, that they are beliefs. This argument applies also to the case of judgments of possibility and probability, where it is not possible to suspend judgment as one does with full beliefs; and where avoidance of error while changing one's mind is not a concern. This is only possible for beliefs, where we can apply the

values of truth and falsity with full sense. Judgments of possibility and probability involve a degree of uncertainty, in other words, they involve doubt, and so suspension of judgment is out of place to begin with.

From this perspective, we would already have a difference between changes of beliefs and changes of value judgments, and this difference would lie on the impossibility to suspend judgment in the latter case. However, as I said, there is another perspective under which, faced with conflicting evaluations, we can suspend judgment to avoid inconsistency. According to this other sense, an agent may be in doubt or suspense with respect to conflicting value judgments, but the doubts are not doubts concerning the truth or falsity of the propositions doubted. Levi tells us about this: "When in such states of doubt, one cannot make judgments concerning the probability of one potential resolution rather than another. Resolving the doubts cannot be seen as a case of adding new full beliefs to one's corpus of full beliefs. And evaluating potential resolutions of such doubts cannot be understood as taking into account the concern to avoid falsehood" (unpublished). None of these characteristics seem to apply to the case of these judgments.

Suspension of judgment in the case of evaluative judgments is not about the truth-value of the conflicting evaluations. Conflicted agents suspend judgment rather on the justification, convenience, practicality, possible consequences, etc., of the entertained propositions; and these other values are going to work as the standard of assessment from which options are going to be ranked. Evaluations are going to be assessed as better and worse in these other terms, not in terms of the truth or falsehood of the conflicting judgments.

In the case of belief, when we suspend judgment between two conflicting beliefs, it is because we are in doubt about the truth of the conflicting beliefs. For instance, in the case of Chris, when he faced the conflict of believing two inconsistent propositions, he suspended judgment about the truth of the hypotheses, and his criterion for determining which option was optimal was precisely which of the hypotheses was

true. Consequently, in the process of inquiry, the person in doubt should try to avoid error, that is, he should care about the possible falsity of the competing alternatives: he should have a concern not to import falsity into his corpus of beliefs; he does not want to import information that creates contradictions with other elements in this corpus. Avoidance of error and the possibility of not getting things straight are (or should be) concerns of the inquirer in this case. One has an interest in being disembarrassed of false beliefs. On the other hand, when we suspend judgment in the case of evaluations, it is not our concern to find the true item and be rid of the other, as when we want to get rid of the false belief. One does not think in terms of banishing error. On this respect, Levi says, making the same point for judgments of possibility and probability:

> If inquirers could be concerned coherently to avoid error in changing judgments of possibility, probability and value, it would then be necessary to represent judgments of possibility, judgments of probability and judgments of value as judgments of truth (that is, as full beliefs) of some kind. In that case, one could characterize doubt or suspense with respect to possibility, probability and value in precisely the same way as is done with respect to full belief. It would then become at least coherent to consider a concern to avoid error (falsehood) to be a desideratum in efforts to modify judgments of possibility, probability and value.[16]

Changes of judgments of possibility, probability and value are different from changes of beliefs in this respect: with truth-value-bearing propositions one should be in a situation of suspending judgment about the truth of the conflicting hypotheses, and when suspending judgment, be concerned with the avoidance of error.

But, isn't it possible to be concerned with the avoidance of error in the case where Sartre's student is conflicted between two obligations,

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[16] *Ibid.* Williams also agrees on the point that, in cases of value conflict, when trying to get things right, we do not think in terms of banishing error, see (1973a, p. 172).

that of staying with his mother and that of joining the French Forces? Someone might think that he does not want to regret his decision and then think that he was mistaken, and that he may be concerned to avoid error. But in this case, by being concerned to avoid falsehood, one of the obligations should be taken as false, and he should stop believing it once discarded and regard it as false—the true one being the one on which he acted. The process through which he decides on which one to act then would involve a concern to be disembarrassed of the false belief. However, even if we could be concerned to avoid falsehood and see the weakest option as false, we do not discard it in the same way as we discard false beliefs, for we can still maintain that that obligation applies to us even if it was "overridden" by the one we chose to act on. If the student decides not to stay with his mother and to act on his obligation to fight for his country, the other obligation, that of staying with his mother to look after her still stands, and he cannot discard it just by regarding it as false. Acting on good reasons in accordance with one of the options of the dilemma does not erase the original obligation with respect to the other. That is, the "false" obligation is not discarded in the same way as the false belief is.

There is still another difference, one that Williams and others have stressed: dilemmas are not settled without a residue. Suppose Sartre's student joins the Free French forces. Most likely he would experience remorse or guilt for having abandoned his mother—we might say that it is appropriate that he feels that way. Yet, had he stayed with his mother, he also might have appropriately experienced a similar feeling. Remorse or guilt are appropriate if the agent properly judges that he has done something wrong; since no matter what the agent does he will appropriately experience remorse or guilt, then no matter what he does he will have done something wrong. The existence of a residue (remorse or guilt) in the case of conflicted obligations does not exist in the case of conflicted beliefs. Once one has abandoned a false belief, there is no residue that accompanies my belief already settled, the false belief does

not get transfigured into some feeling of remorse—we would not say that it is appropriate that the agent feels that way, unless this belief was accompanied by some sort of emotion or desire. The false belief is erased in a way the "false" obligation is not.[17]

Finally, there is another difference between changes of truth-value-bearing attitudes, such as full belief, and changes of attitudes such as judgments of probability, possibility and value. In the case of the former, the inquiring agent knows that the content of any given proposition has the values true or false as final attributes, and there is no third possibility. One can certainly make judgments concerning the probability of one potential resolution rather than another; probabilities may be assigned to a proposition and its negation, but these probabilities are not intermediate truth-values between truth and falsity. However, unlike the case of full belief, where we can assign probabilities to conjectures between which we are in suspense, in the case of value judgments this assignment is not possible. Since the values assigned to our permissible options are not "true" or "false", but just "better" or "worse" (or "equal"), no probabilities can be assigned. As Levi says: "The situation is different in the case of suspense among different rankings of feasible options as better or worse. Not only should the agent regard each of the different rankings as permissible; but other rankings different from those originally in conflict may be recognized as representing potential resolutions or compromises and as such should also be regarded as permissible" (1986, p. 10). The conflicting rankings are permissible, but other, "intermediate" or different, rankings may also be taken as permissible. One cannot regard any of the alternatives as more probable than the other one, and assign them intervals of probabilities, as in the case of competing truth-value-bearing hypotheses. Moreover, while in suspense

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[17] There is some controversy about the inevitability of residues, even though Williams and Barcan Marcus stress the point, authors such as Levi question it. See McConnell (2002), for more on this controversy.

between alternatives, one might think of other possible options different from the two original ones that could be regarded as admissible. Thus, unlike the case of belief, assignment of probabilities is not possible, due to the lack of truth-values of value judgments.

In contrast with the case of belief, the inquirer does not hold that one of the rankings is true even if she does not know which one it is. In a moral dilemma, one regards all the rankings as permissible in order to assess which one is better, all things considered. Certainly she cares about the possibility of one of her rankings being wrong, but not false. By "wrong" I mean that she cares about the justification that she provides for each alternative, that is, for the reasons that support each alternative in the light of one's principles and the possible consequences of one's act after the time of action. The aims of inquiry in the cases of changes of belief and changes of value judgments generated by conflict are different: while in the case of belief one of the aims of inquiry is truth, and trying to avoid error should be a concern of the inquirer, in the case of value judgments these are not the aims of inquiry, but rather trying to get the better reasons for justifying one's judgment or action given the information available. In the case of value conflicts, inquiry tries to find justification for changing one's own mind and making a decision. Justifying this change of mind and the consequent decision, and not truth, is a goal of inquiry in value conflicts. This I would take to count as reaching the determinate situation that inquiry aims at in the case of value judgments.

Furthermore, once one has changed one's own mind about a value conflict, resolving doubts cannot be seen as a case of adding new full beliefs to one's corpus of full beliefs. In the case of truth-value-bearing attitudes, such as full belief, changing one's mind in the sense of adding new information to one's corpus of belief amounts to an expansion in that corpus. With cases of value judgments there is no such addition of new full beliefs to one's corpus of beliefs.

To sum up, the philosophical point here is that when changing our minds, there is a demand that if one has truth-value-bearing attitudes, such as beliefs, one should be in a position to suspend judgment about the truth of the conflicting propositions, and when suspending judgment, one should be concerned with the avoidance of error. One should also be in a position of assigning intervals of probability to conjectures between which one is in suspense. If all this does not apply to cases of value judgments, it is because the normativity that regulates the dynamics of beliefs fails to apply to those of value judgments.

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