A criterion for the fitting attitude analysis of affective values

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According to fitting attitude analyses of values (see recently Scanlon, 1998), an object is, say, admirable if and only if admiration fits the object. These analyses of value face the wrong kind of reasons problem (Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2004) insofar as one may have an overriding reason to admire an object (a demon threatens to inflict us severe pain if we do not admire him) although the object (the demon) is not admirable. All existing attempts to overcome the problem (except Kauppinen, 2014) have concluded from such cases that the relevant notion of fittingness must not encompass prudential and moral reasons (d’Arms & Jacobson, 2000). I disagree (Author, 2012). However, in defending that this notion must be understood in terms of prudential and moral reasons, I need to provide a criterion that sets apart the prudential and moral reasons that explain the notion of fittingness. My suggestion is that an emotion E fits an object O if and only if it is prudentially and morally better from the point of view of an entire life, to have a disposition to experience E in front of O.

In other words, the set of the right kind of reason is not a subset of the reasons that are present in a given context but the larger set of reasons that may be relevant in all the encounters of O within a lifespan. However, this criterion is still inadequate in the context of a tyranny insofar as it may be preferable to admire the tyrant from a prudential or even moral point of view. To overcome this objection, I argue that the context in which emotional dispositions are assessed must be morally idealized and I explain how this should be done.

I finally argue that this criterion concurs both with our intuition about our true sensibility as a sensibility unaffected by perverse contexts and with the regulating ideal of a State or social context that would allow us to live the best moral lifes possible.