

# The Epistemology of Emotional Experience

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## ABSTRACT

This article responds to two arguments against “Epistemic Perceptualism”, the view that emotional experiences, as involving a perception of value, can constitute reasons for evaluative belief. It first provides a basic account of emotional experience (Section 1), and then introduces concepts relevant to the epistemology of emotional experience, such as the nature of a reason for belief, non-inferentiality, and *prima facie* vs. conclusive reasons, which allow for the clarification of Epistemic Perceptualism in terms of the Perceptual Justificatory View (Section 2). It then challenges two arguments which purport to show that emotional experience is not a source of reasons for evaluative belief (Sections 3, 4 and 5). The first argument claims that because normative why-questions are always appropriate in the case of emotions, then emotions can never be conclusive reasons for corresponding evaluative beliefs. The second purports to show that appeal to emotional experience as a source of reasons for evaluative beliefs renders emotions problematically self-justifying, and since emotions cannot be (even provisionally) self-justifying, they cannot provide any sort of reason for corresponding evaluative beliefs. This article responds to these arguments, and in doing so shows there is still much to be learned about the epistemology of emotional experience by drawing analogies with perceptual experience.

Recent work in philosophy of emotion has cast doubt on whether emotions can justify, in the sense of providing reasons for, corresponding evaluative beliefs. Much of this scepticism has been channeled through criticism of perceptual views, according to which emotional experience involves something like a perception of value (e.g. fear involves a perceptual experience as of something dangerous). The putative analogy between emotional and perceptual experience seems to provide one way of defending a justificatory role for emotions, since sense-perceptual experience is often taken to constitute reasons, and so justification, for corresponding empirical beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

This article responds to two arguments against “Epistemic Perceptualism”, the view that emotional experiences, as involving a perception of value, can constitute reasons for evaluative belief.<sup>2</sup> The first claims that because normative why-questions are always appropriate for emotional experience this

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<sup>1</sup> For some defenders of the perceptual view with an epistemological emphasis, see Johnston 2001; Deonna 2006; Poellner 2007; 2016; Tappolet 2000; 2012; Döring 2007; 2014; Pelser 2014; Wringe 2015. For criticism of the perceptual view along epistemic lines see Goldie 2004; Brady 2010; 2011; Salmela 2011; Deonna and Teroni 2012. For a detailed survey of the perceptual view, along with some recent criticisms of it, see Döring and Lutz 2015.

<sup>2</sup> For this label see Cowan 2016, see Section 2 for clarification of this view.

highlights a disanalogy between the epistemological roles of emotions and sense perceptions, such that emotions can never be conclusive reasons for corresponding evaluative beliefs. The second purports to show that appeal to emotional experience as a source of reasons for evaluative beliefs renders emotions problematically self-justifying, and since emotions cannot be (even provisionally) self-justifying we should give up the claim that emotions can be any sort of reason for corresponding evaluative beliefs (Brady 2010; 2011).

My aim is therefore primarily defensive and explicative; responding to arguments which purport to show that Epistemic Perceptualism is not a live option. Section 1 provides a basic account of emotional experience. Section 2 introduces concepts relevant to the epistemology of emotional experience, such as the nature of a reason for belief, non-inferentiality, and *prima facie* vs. conclusive reasons, which allow for the clarification of Epistemic Perceptualism in terms of the Perceptual Justificatory View (Section 2). Section 3 then considers the above arguments, with Sections 4 and 5 responding to them. Section 4 argues there are emotions for which normative why-questions are inappropriate, and explains how considerations relating to the opacity of emotions and defeating situations accounts for the prevalence of such questions. Section 5 then argues that a more nuanced understanding of emotional experience, as involving a kind of content externalism, and relatedly an awareness of epistemic appropriateness, can meet the challenge set by the second, “auto-justification” argument.

## **1. A Basic Account**

It is commonplace to think emotions typically involve (1) a first-personal qualitative character and (2) an object at which they are directed, and so some form of intentional or representational content. For example, as the subject of anger I typically experience a feeling of disapproval along with certain bodily sensations, such as muscle tensing and increased heart rate – there is something it feels like to experience anger – and moreover, there is usually something I am angry about; for example, the inconsiderate individual who just barged into me.<sup>3</sup> However, emotions are not states that assail us *ex nihilo*. Rather, often this affective phenomenology is (3) experienced as caused by – as an apparent effect of – the object it is directed towards. In certain cases, the actual cause of the emotion and its object can come apart, although this typically does not show up in the emotional episode, yet it might in reflective judgements about what caused the emotion. In this sense, what matters for the basic account is apparent, experienced, intentional causality. We should add that (4) emotional experience is typically pre-reflective, since although I can reflect on my emotions, reflection is not an essential part of

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<sup>3</sup> See Deonna and Teroni 2012.

emotional experience.<sup>4</sup> Relatedly, the discussion in what follows pertains to occurrent emotions, understood as emotions consciously experienced by individuals at particular times, rather than emotional or affective dispositions, or long-lasting emotional states.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, there is a close connection between emotions and values, in that emotions (minimally) seem to involve (5) evaluative appraisals of their objects. For example, admiration involves an appraisal of its object as of value, as admirable; likewise disgust involves an appraisal of its object as of disvalue, as disgusting.<sup>6</sup> In this sense the priority thesis – the view that emotions are reactions to temporally prior evaluations – is a misunderstanding of the way evaluative appraisals are part of emotional experience.<sup>7</sup> Relatedly, the values that typically figure in the appraisals characteristic of emotional experience are thick (determinate) values, such as the disgusting, fearsome, admirable, and sublime, rather than thin (determinable) values such as the good, bad, or (dis)valuable.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Epistemological Clarifications and the PJV

Given this account, could emotional experience provide us with reasons for holding evaluative beliefs about their objects? For example, could my disgust at a scene of public execution – my felt evaluative appraisal of the public execution as of determinate disvalue – provide me with reasons, and so justification, for the evaluative belief, “this execution is disgusting”? Before presenting a version of the perceptual view which offers an affirmative answer, and in doing so modifies the evaluative dimension of the basic account, a number of issues relevant to the epistemology of emotions need clarifying.

First, we need some conception of a reason. As T. M Scanlon (1998, 17) puts it, a reason is “a consideration that counts in favour of something”. So, in the case of a reason for belief, what is required is a consideration in the light of which someone would be rationally justified in holding the belief. Given this, we might think two requirements are necessary for a subject to have a reason for belief; (1) an awareness or recognition on the part of the subject of what her reasons for belief are, and in virtue of this (2) the subject having been in a prior mental state apt to make available some such reason.<sup>9</sup> (1) and (2) are necessary insofar as reason-giving explanations are, as Bill Brewer (1999, 165) puts it, “explanations of certain transitions which a person makes in thought”, and as such they must be rule-

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<sup>4</sup> The term pre-reflective is intended to distinguish between emotional experience as lived through, and emotional experience as reflected upon. See Marcel and Lambie 2002.

<sup>5</sup> See Lyons 1980: 53-7.

<sup>6</sup> This is not to claim there is always a one-to-one relation between emotion-types and evaluative properties. For the purposes of this article I overlook this complication (for discussion see Mulligan 1998).

<sup>7</sup> See Teroni 2007 (cf. Mulligan 2007; 2010).

<sup>8</sup> There are other basic features of emotional experience which are sometimes highlighted but which do not concern me here (on valence see Section 4 and 5).

<sup>9</sup> These conditions are typically thought of as epistemically “internalist” (cf. Burge 2003).

governed. Yet, to speak of a person's reasons as their reasons for belief, as the kind of things which they could cite to rationally justify holding the relevant belief, what is required is an awareness of oneself as being guided, in making the transition, by the relevant reasons; so, not merely following a rule, but a self-awareness of being guided by what one takes to be normative reasons.<sup>10</sup>

The prior mental state in question, which might serve as, or make available, a reason for evaluative belief, is an emotional experience. We are asking whether an emotional experience can ever be a consideration in favour of holding the corresponding evaluative belief, where the subject is aware that her emotional experience (or some part of it) is that in the light of which it would be the right thing to do to hold the belief.<sup>11</sup>

Second, at least in the basic case, we should not think emotional experience involves, even if only in part, an evaluative belief or judgement (cf. Nussbaum, 2001; Solomon, 1976).<sup>12</sup> The rationale for this claim comes partly from cases of emotional recalcitrance, which show that an emotional episode can persist even when it directly contradicts the content of a (conscious) belief held simultaneously; much like typical perceptual illusions, the emotion persists even after one has been appraised of the relevant fact, and sincerely holds the relevant belief (e.g. the stick is *not* bent, the spider is *not* dangerous). If emotional experiences were constituted, at least in part, by evaluative beliefs or judgements then emotional recalcitrance would be structurally identical to holding logically contradictory propositional contents, e.g. "the spider is dangerous and it is not the case that the spider is dangerous". Yet, there seems to be a difference between the kind, or severity, of conflict when someone is entertaining directly conflicting beliefs or judgements, and when someone's emotions are not in line with their sincerely avowed better judgement.<sup>13</sup> So, we do best to think of emotional experience as not typically involving evaluative beliefs or judgements.

On the basis of the above, can emotional experience, which is not constituted by evaluative belief, ever be a source of reasons for evaluative belief? Answering in the affirmative suggests the following view:

Justificatory View (hereafter JV): an emotional response to O (where O is the object of the emotional experience) is a reason to believe that O is E (where E is a determinate evaluative property).

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<sup>10</sup> See McDowell 2011, 17; 2013a: 149. By providing reason-giving explanations in this sense it is sometimes said the subject is in the logical space of reasons – of justifying and being able to justify what they say (see Sellars 1997, §36).

<sup>11</sup> This view of what can serve as a reason for belief overlooks complications, however for the purposes of this article it is all that is required. For some problems with experiences serving as reasons for belief in this way see Burge 2003; Ginsborg 2006; Roessler 2009.

<sup>12</sup> This is not to deny there can be belief-based emotions, but to stress these are not the basic cases.

<sup>13</sup> For further discussion, see Tappolet 2012; Helm 2001; Brady 2007; Döring 2014.

The JV would say my aesthetic admiration for a painting, which (minimally) involves a felt evaluative appraisal of it (its being admirable), is a reason for me holding the evaluative belief “this painting is admirable”.

However, we need to understand how the rational transition to evaluative belief works. Here an analogy between emotional and sense-perceptual experience can be drawn. Typically sense-perceptual experiences are taken to provide reasons for holding the relevant empirical beliefs non-inferentially: in paradigmatic sense-perceptual experience there need be no epistemic intermediary between a subject’s having the experience and their being in a position to assent to the corresponding empirical belief.<sup>14</sup> These beliefs are, as Marie McGinn (2011, 1) puts it, ones we are in a position to make straight off: there is no reasoning required on the part of the subject, and no antecedent belief on the basis of which I would need to make an inference, to be in a position to state the belief. Note, the claim about non-inferentiality is not merely a phenomenological one, that it just happens to be the case that we typically take such experiences as reasons for empirical beliefs in this way, but that there is a significant epistemic connection – a non-inferential one – between sense-perceptual experience and *justified* empirical belief. Given this, it is often claimed sense-perceptual experience is an epistemically direct representation or presentation of its object.<sup>15</sup> For example, my visual experience of this table in front of me as red and rectangular is a direct perceptual (re)presentation of it, on the basis of which I would be (non-inferentially) justified in believing the proposition “this table is red and rectangular”.

Adam Pelser (2014, 114) claims the same characteristics for emotions; “the reason some emotion-based beliefs are justified is, plausibly, that emotions are direct experiences (perceptions) of thick, particular values...and that, as such, emotions function as justifying reasons for corresponding evaluative beliefs”.<sup>16</sup> We can expand on this by saying it is on the basis of the claim that emotional experience is a direct perceptual (re)presentation of value – emotions (re)present their objects as being a determinate evaluative way – that they can constitute reasons for non-inferentially formed *justified* evaluative beliefs. It is claimed emotional experience can play this epistemic role, and so a perceptualist

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<sup>14</sup> For the view that lack of inferential structure suggests that the content of perceptual experience is non-conceptual see Crane 1992.

<sup>15</sup> I include the disjunction to signal that nothing in this article turns on whether one is committed to direct representationalism or naïve realism about perceptual experiences or emotional experiences. I signal this by using (re) before each instance of presentation. For some of the challenges faced by representationalism in emotion theory see L. Schroeter, F. Schroeter and K. Jones 2015.

<sup>16</sup> See also Johnston 2001; Döring 2007; 2014. This overlooks a complication, since one might ask what the perceptualist should say about those cases where the object of the emotion is *not* perceptually present (e.g. fear about a doctor’s appointment I have booked for the following day). See Poellner 2016, 1-2, and 23, fn. 18, for discussion of such “derivative” cases in a way sympathetic to the perceptual model.

version of the JV can be offered, once we see that emotions (re)present evaluative properties in a way analogous to how sense-perceptual experience (re)presents empirical properties. Rephrased with this perceptualist gloss we get the following view:

Perceptualist Justificatory View (hereafter PJV): an emotional response to O (where O is the object of the emotional experience), given it involves an epistemically direct (re)presentation of O as E (where E is a determinate evaluative property), is a reason to believe that O is E.<sup>17</sup>

However, there is ambiguity. The PJV does not make explicit whether the reason for belief provided by (perceptual) emotional experience is always *prima facie* – only providing provisional justification – or *ultima facie* – providing sufficient justification (what I call conclusive reasons). If it was the latter then the belief would not be merely provisionally well-grounded, but at present undefeated, and so in need of no further support.<sup>18</sup> Epistemic Perceptualism, as Robert Cowan (2016) frames it, claims emotional experience only provides non-inferential *prima facie* warrant for evaluative beliefs; this is the most prevalent view in the literature (Elgin 2008; Döring 2007; Pelser 2014). The motivation for similar views in philosophy of perception stems from a claim about the fallibility of the capacities involved, since solely on the basis of what is given in sense-perceptual experience we cannot rule out the possibility of falsehood; we might, and sometimes do, turn out to be wrong in our perceptual beliefs. By extension, it is claimed even absent defeating conditions – in situations where a perceptual capacity provides us with knowledge (sufficient justification) – we could only ever take ourselves, “from the inside”, to have *prima facie* warrant. This is because of the supposed soundness of the highest common factor argument. This argument tells us that the grounds we possess for perceptual belief can only be what is shared by both non-deceptive and subjectively indistinguishable deceptive perceptual experiences, and since the deceptive cases seem to provide us with such conclusive reasons but do not, then we only ever possess *prima facie* warrant for belief on the basis of what is given in experience. Even in so called good cases we cannot, “from the inside”, rule out that we are in one of the bad cases.

Should Epistemic Perceptualism, as framed through the PJV, adopt this caveat and say the reasons emotional experience provides are only ever *prima facie*? We might think it should, since if we can imagine deceptive emotional experiences which are subjectively indistinguishable from non-deceptive

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<sup>17</sup> Note, the perceptualist gloss on the JV is only one way of attempting to vindicate an epistemological role for emotional experience. Although for reasons highlighted evaluative judgement theories should be avoided, Deonna and Teroni’s attitudinal theory preserves a positive epistemological role for emotional experience (see Deonna and Teroni 2012). But see Section 5 for some worries about this view.

<sup>18</sup> See Senor 1996 on the distinction.

cases, then the highest common factor argument also applies to emotional experience.<sup>19</sup> However, such highest common factor arguments have been resisted in philosophy of perception, most prominently by John McDowell (McDowell 2013b; Soteriou 2016, 135f): McDowell defends a form of epistemological disjunctivism according to which, in “good cases”, sense-perceptual experience provides conclusive reasons, and so sufficient justification, for perceptual beliefs about our environment.

Here is not the place to adjudicate between competing positions in philosophy of perception, but which of the above views of perceptual justification should the PJV opt for? Aligning the PJV with McDowell’s epistemological disjunctivism is more ambitious, since if transposed correctly (and if it turns out to be the most plausible view of perceptual justification), we could claim that in the “good cases” emotional experience provides conclusive reasons for evaluative belief. In that sense, emotional perception would be a (fallible) capacity for evaluative knowledge. However, while it is worth bearing both views in mind throughout this article, the PJV need not choose, since the two arguments considered target both the claim that emotional experience provides conclusive reasons and/or *prima facie* reasons for evaluative belief. In this sense, the first move for Epistemic Perceptualism as considered here is a defensive one of responding to arguments which purport to show that the PJV is not a live option under either view of perceptual justification.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Objections to the PJV

Michael Brady (2010; 2011) argues against the PJV, claiming that emotional experience, understood along perceptualist lines, does not provide reasons, either conclusive or *prima facie*, for evaluative belief (see also Deonna and Teroni 2012, 69). Brady’s arguments attempt to sever the link between the epistemology of sense perception and putative emotional perception of value. As we saw, the PJV trades off a well-established model of the connection between sense-perceptual experience and reasons for empirical belief; a model we are then invited to apply to emotional experience given certain putative similarities.

The arguments Brady puts forward are as follows: (1) Normative why-questions are always appropriate in the case of an emotional experience but are not in sense-perceptual experience. This

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<sup>19</sup> As we shall see in Section 5 it is plausible to think emotional experience involves what Cowan (2016, 63) calls a “robust phenomenology”, in that “it both makes it seem to the subject that P and makes it seem to them as if the experience makes them aware of a truth-maker for P” (see also Chudnoff 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Brady (2013, 81-2) claims that since emotional experiences are not the only sources of evaluative belief, then a key motivation for this kind of epistemological disjunctivism in the sense perceptual case – namely the sceptical problem of what other than perceptual experiences could provide us with knowledge about our environment – does not carry over for emotional experience. In other words, emotional experiences do not seem to be epistemically indispensable for evaluative knowledge in the way sense perceptual experience might be for empirical knowledge. For criticism of this claim see Cowan 2016.

arguably shows that emotional experiences can *never* be conclusive reasons for evaluative belief. (2) Appeal to emotional experience as a source of reasons for belief renders emotions problematically self-justifying, and since emotions cannot (even provisionally) justify themselves, we should give up the claim that emotions can be any sort of reason for corresponding evaluative beliefs.

Taking (1) first, consider a standard sense-perceptual experience. For example, say I was in the park looking at an oak tree in my field of vision. It would normally be inappropriate, and perhaps even nonsensical, for someone to ask “why do you see that as a tree”, except if they were in search of an empirical story about neurophysiology and physical objects. In this sense, normative why-questions, where what we are questioning is the justifying role of our experiences, seem surplus to requirements in sense-perceptual experience. However, Brady claims in the case of emotional experience, it always makes sense to ask questions of the kind “why are you afraid of that dog” or “why are you in awe of that painting”. This suggests the epistemological roles of sense-perceptual experience and emotional experience are not analogous, as we require reasons for the response in the case of the latter in a way we typically do not in the former, which supposedly shows that emotional experience cannot be a conclusive reason for evaluative belief.

Moving on to (2), Brady claims that even appealing to emotional experience as a source of *prima facie* reasons for belief renders emotions problematically self-justifying. To explain why he draws on neo-sentimentalism (hereafter S-theories): a view in meta-ethics which specifies what is involved in being a competent user of evaluative concepts (Wiggins 1987; McDowell 1985; D’Arms and Jacobson 2005).<sup>21</sup> According to S-theories the use of evaluative concepts (e.g. dangerous) should be understood as making a necessary reference to the merit of a specific emotional response to the evaluatively predicated object. So, to judge that O is E is, in part, to judge that it is appropriate to feel A (a specific emotion) in response to O. For example, to judge that rabid dogs are dangerous, and so correctly apply the concept dangerous to rabid dogs, is (in part) to say it is appropriate to feel fear in response to rabid dogs (see McDowell 1998, 221).

Brady (2010, 123) argues that if this view of evaluative concepts, and their application in propositional attitudes like beliefs and judgements, is correct, then emotional experiences cannot be reasons of any kind for evaluative beliefs:

My fear of the dog, for instance, cannot be a reason to judge that the dog is dangerous, for then my fear would be a reason to judge that fear in these circumstances is appropriate or merited or fitting – and we have good reason to doubt that fear can justify itself in this way. The very fact that I am afraid of the dog cannot, by itself, be evidence that it is fitting or appropriate to be afraid of the dog.

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<sup>21</sup> For a critique of certain aspects of sentimentalist views see Tappolet 2011.

The problem is that if I am entitled to cite emotional experience as a reason for evaluative belief, then it seems experiencing fear gives me a reason to believe (although not a conclusive one) that fear is appropriate; such that experiencing fear – awareness of fear – becomes identical to an awareness that fear is appropriate. We might put this by saying appropriateness cannot be part of the emotional experience, but requires a judgement about it. Whether or not my fear is appropriate is a normative why-question that cannot be even provisionally answered by appealing to fear without begging the question.

If these arguments are sound, we have grounds for scepticism about the epistemic role of emotional experience presented at the end of Section 2. What follows in Sections 4 and 5 provides reasons for resisting them.

#### **4. Normative Why-Questions**

*(a) Are normative why-questions always appropriate?*

First, we might ask whether normative why-questions are always warranted in the case of emotional experience. For example, say I see the bereaved crying at a funeral, which constitutes, given certain other conditions, an emotional expression. It seems the mere fact that someone expresses (or in certain contexts might report) an emotion does not necessitate such questioning. Second, and more importantly, are such questions always appropriate? Consider again the bereaved at the funeral. We might think in such a situation asking a normative why-question would be inappropriate, where the question takes the form “why are you sad about X dying”. Moreover, this does not seem just a case of arbitrary social convention (e.g. don’t ask such questions at funerals); such a convention might be in play, but the convention seems to partly stem from the way certain kinds of emotions independently render such lines of questioning inappropriate.

Nevertheless, we need to say more about such cases. It could be that what is doing the work in blocking the appropriateness of a normative why-question here is the context rather than the emotion. Let’s assume after the funeral the bereaved takes a walk, and stumbles across an acquaintance who has no knowledge of the bereavement. The acquaintance, seeing that the bereaved is upset, asks “why are you sad”, and in this different context the question seems appropriate; the sadness seems to be subject to a question of justification.<sup>22</sup> However, when posed in this way we do not have a clear example of a normative why-question of the kind Brady highlights, for example “why are you afraid of that dog”, but rather a request for information about the object or event one is sad about. In contrast to the funeral which, in virtue of context, provides the answer to this question, what is required “out of context” is the

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<sup>22</sup> I owe this example to an anonymous referee.

relevant intentional information, rather than justification. If, after specifying the object, our acquaintance then asked the bereaved, “why are you sad about X dying”, then again, we seem to have a case where the normative why-question would be inappropriate. This conclusion is supported by the related idea that in such cases, if the acquaintance had no evidence for thinking the emotional expression insincere (e.g. “wait a minute, didn’t they despise that relative”), then it seems they could be credited with an (albeit fairly commonplace) emotional understanding by not asking the question on the grounds that they know it to be inappropriate.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps part of the explanation for this case – where a normative why-question is inappropriate or at any rate unnecessary – is that it is difficult to imagine what further justificatory reason could be given by the emotional subject; they would most likely just provide a verbalized re-statement of what the emotional expression contained anyway, e.g. “because it’s sad”. If the facts of the case are true (the relative is dead) and the emotion is sincere (it is a genuine loss for them), then it is difficult to see what would further satisfy the normative why-question, “why are you sad about X dying”. One needs to be careful though, since the question is not inappropriate because the emotion is not the kind of thing to which justificatory predicates can be applied; say in the way no one would likely think it appropriate to ask a normative why-question about a physical pain they could see you were undergoing (“why are you in pain with that drill in your tooth”). Rather, in the case under consideration, the emotion’s expression or report seems to block the appropriateness of the normative why-question, in that the question of justification comes “pre-answered”. In other words, the emotion shows up for us, in the individual’s emotional expression, and in knowledge of the context, as sufficiently justified.

However, it might be objected that the reason we think it inappropriate to ask a normative why-question in such a case is because we know independently that the death of a close relative (usually) is a bad thing. So, it would not be anything about the emotional experience that was doing the justificatory work, but rather that independent evaluative knowledge. Yet, is this a fair description of what happens in the case under consideration? Do we see the bereaved is upset and think it inappropriate to ask a normative why-question, not because of anything about the emotion, but because of some independent evaluative knowledge we possess? Note, in such cases it does not seem correct that we have on the one hand awareness of an epistemically neutral emotional expression – say, crying indicative of sadness – and on the other knowledge of an impersonal evaluative fact, namely that “the death of a close relative (usually) is a bad thing”. Rather, even if there is some tacit evaluative knowledge in play,

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<sup>23</sup> It is an interesting question whether there are other cases of emotions like these. Perhaps “being happy about passing your driving test”, or “being happy about a job promotion”. Note though, Brady says emotions are *never* conclusive reasons for evaluative belief, so all that is required to show this is not the case is one counter-example.

the emotion seems to be (partly) expressive of a personally-indexed version of it, that “the death of Mary is bad for Jane”; the death of a close relative is a genuine loss *for them*. In this sense, it is not some separate or independent impersonal evaluative knowledge that makes the normative why-question inappropriate, but our awareness of a personal evaluative fact of which the emotion is partly expressive. That it is a genuine loss for them can hardly be divorced, at least in the first instance, from the emotion which is constitutive of their sense of loss.

In light of this, it might be maintained that what is doing the work in blocking the appropriateness of the normative why-question is tacit agreement about the epistemic status of the emotion – we all just accept it to be sufficiently justified. Of course, explaining the source of any such agreement (e.g. in evolutionary biological terms) would be a complex undertaking, but it seems an undeniable fact about this emotion that it has this feature; sadness or grief about a recent close bereavement is just the kind of emotion for which a normative why-question seems inappropriate, or at any rate unnecessary. Cain Todd (2014, 101-2) suggests a similar kind of explanation:

[C]onstruing the death of loved ones as a loss to which sadness is the warranted response may be so hardwired and universal, so immune to our ability to control it, that any failure to feel sadness, or any tendency to have another emotional response, will normally be explained...in terms of certain abnormal conditions. Abnormal conditions in such cases will just be any conditions that are appealed to in order to explain departures from the norm, and the norms just will be taken to be something like ‘all’ or ‘most’ human beings.

However, it should be clear not all emotions are like this, indeed most are not. For example, in a straightforward modification of the example, if we were at a funeral and saw the bereaved was buoyant during the service, we may think it appropriate to ask “why are you happy about X dying”. So, normative why-questions about emotions can and do arise. Therefore, even given the above, Brady is right to highlight that they are a feature in the epistemology of our emotional lives in a way they are not in ordinary sense-perception. Nevertheless, if we countenance the above case then it is no longer correct to say, as Brady does, that normative why-questions are *always* appropriate, even if we think they are in most cases. If this is right then it is also no longer correct to say emotional experiences can *never* be conclusive reasons for evaluative belief on the basis of that false antecedent.

What is now required is a different explanation of the prevalence of normative why-questions for emotions, yet one which does not advert to the claim that the reason such questions are a prevalent feature of their epistemology is because emotional experience can never be a source of conclusive reasons for evaluative belief. In what follows I argue that a set of considerations, which are epistemically

relevant to the justification of emotions, can explain this feature while allowing for so-called “good cases”.

In the following sub-sections my argument runs as follows. I first contrast reflexive and non-reflexive emotions, suggesting reflexive emotions have a specific kind of opacity. I then claim all emotions have a more generic opacity due to their valenced phenomenology. Both *reflexive opacity* and *valenced opacity* are said to extend the range of possible defeating situations in different ways, which accounts for the prevalence of normative why-questions for emotions. However, the prevalence of such questions due to the existence of a greater range of defeating situations does not, by itself, warrant the conclusion that emotional experience can never be a source of conclusive reasons. That is to say, it does not undermine the possibility of “good cases” – like in the example above – where for all we know, there are at present no defeaters.

*(b) Opacity, reflexive and non-reflexive emotions*

It is fairly well accepted that sense-perceptual experience is transparent: if asked to describe the content of a sense-perceptual experience we would just describe (apparent) features of the object of that experience. If asked to describe a sense-perceptual experience of seeing a red ball I would describe the redness as a feature of the ball, not as a feature of the experience; my experience is not *red*, but is of something that is red. As Micheal Tye (2008, 46) puts it, “when you try to attend to it, you “see” right through it, as it were, to the things and qualities outside that it represents”.<sup>24</sup> Further reflection motivates the conclusion that the subject of the experience does not, at least in successful and paradigmatic cases, figure in an accurate description of the experience. This might partly explain how normative why-questions can become apt in sense-perceptual experience when we have reason to doubt the presence of full transparency; when we have reason to think the subject’s perspective is having a distorting influence, potentially undermining veridicality.

But consider first, the way a certain class of reflexive (self-referential) emotional experiences are not transparent in this way. For example, in experiencing paradigmatic fear we are not just aware of a particular object as dangerous, but also of ourselves as threatened. Likewise, in certain kinds of material envy, we are not just aware of a particular object as worthy of possession, typically one which someone else has, but also of ourselves as lacking possession of that object. Accurate descriptions of reflexive emotions, since they presuppose an apprehension of self, involve a reference to the self-interest and

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<sup>24</sup> See also Harman 1990. There is a distinction between “strong” and “weak” versions of the transparency thesis. The “weak” version claims an accurate description of the content of a perceptual experience would *mostly* describe apparent features of the object; the “strong” version claims such descriptions would be exclusively couched in terms of apparent features of the object, such that no non-object involving aspects of the experience would be referenced (see Kind 2003).

self-concern of the subject. More specifically, the subject's evaluative standing is at the forefront of the evaluative aspect of the experience, e.g. myself as threatened, myself as lacking X. As we shall see in what follows, this reference to self-concern has an important role to play in the epistemic context. Note, my claim is about the way evaluative self-concern figures in reflexive emotional experience "at the forefront". It is not equivalent to the claim that (perhaps all) emotions are in some way dependent on certain prior evaluative background conditions such as beliefs, motivations, cultural norms, character traits, etc. – what Cain Todd (2016, 97) calls "subjective evaluative conditions".

In the case of reflexive emotions, it is implausible there are, at least in typical cases, two distinct moments or perceptions. For example, in the case of fear, it seems implausible to think there is both a representation of an object as dangerous, and then a (temporally) distinct "objectifying" representation of myself as threatened, such that I might have to infer the former from the latter. In typical cases of fear, it seems phenomenologically incorrect to say I am aware of moving from a perception of danger to a perception of myself as in danger (or vice versa). Rather, it seems correct to say I often experience something as *dangerous for me*, such that in paradigmatic cases of fear the relevant intentional content approximates to *danger for me*.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, this avoids further worries which arise with a "double representation" view, such as how the same formal object (e.g. danger) can be appraised of two different material objects, both the object and myself. So, for the perceptualist at least, it seems right to say that in typical cases of reflexive emotions my self-concern is *embedded* in the intentional content of the emotional experience.<sup>26</sup>

We might wonder how the "for me" component is revealed in the phenomenology of such emotions, and whether it can be explained in a way that does not embed the subject's self-concern in its intentional content. For example, consider Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni's (2012, 69) description of an episode of fear:

If you are to describe how it feels to be frightened by a spider, you would not do so in terms of the spider's qualities, but rather in terms of how it feels to experience a jolt up your spine, your hair standing on end, your teeth clenching, muscles freezing, heart jumping.

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<sup>25</sup> Note, these considerations relate to the personal level of emotional experience; there might be a different story to be told about what happens at the sub-personal level. For a detailed examination of fear with sympathies for the perceptual view see Tappolet 2010.

<sup>26</sup> This aspect differs for some other, and often more complex, reflexive emotions. For example, the way my self-concern is embedded in the intentional content of a paradigmatic episode of fear, namely in the *dangerousness for me* of a typically externally present object, is different to the self-concern in the more complex reflexive emotions like embarrassment and shame. In the later cases, there is a distinctive kind of inward "self-objectification", which there typically is not in fear. I overlook such complications here, since what unifies the class of reflexive emotions more broadly is that the subject's self-concern is at the forefront, and this is as true of fear as it is of embarrassment, shame, or indeed guilt or pride.

At first glance it seems attractive to identify the “for me” component solely in terms of these somatic states. However, even in the case of a “hot” reflexive emotion like fear, the somatic state seems to be a reflection of my self-concern, rather than constituting it. In fact, in typical cases of fear the somatic state might be experienced as caused by a self-awareness which is already given in the intentional content; such that in fear I perceive an object as *dangerous for me*, and I experience this as causing the somatic state.<sup>27</sup> Further, it should be clear not all reflexive emotions are necessarily accompanied by such somatic states, for example conscious envy need not be accompanied by felt bodily qualia, but nevertheless involves an awareness of self-concern at its forefront. Indeed, they would not be the kinds of emotions they are without this kind of self-awareness. I label this *reflexive opacity*, to signal the specific way these kinds of emotions are not transparent.

Reflexive emotions can be contrasted with non-reflexive cases which, *prima facie*, might possess an analogous transparency to sense-perceptual experience, as they do not involve, or more accurately are not distinctly experienced by their subjects as having, the self-referential aspects of the above cases. For example, if I were to provide a description of my emotion of aesthetic admiration for a painting it is plausible that such self-referential aspects would *not* substantially figure in that report. Rather, typically the report would primarily consist of evaluatively relevant features of the object, for example the way the painting exhibits determinate beauty. Something similar might also be said of the non-reflexive emotion of empathy. In describing my empathy for a friend whom I saw to be suffering I might, in the first instance, just point to features of his situation as revealed in experience, e.g. that he is having a particularly bad time of it at the moment, such that my self-concern would not figure substantially in a report. Moreover, it is implausible to think these emotions are not transparent in virtue of involving somatic states, of the kind we considered above in the case of fear. As Peter Poellner (2016, 13) notes when considering admiration:

There may be somatic accompaniments, as when I feel my body opening up or relaxing, but it is hard to believe that I could not experience awe without something like these feelings...And even when I do have such bodily feelings, they seem to be effects of other components of the emotional experience, in particular, of the way the object is experienced anyway, without the putative contribution of those feelings.

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<sup>27</sup> See Poellner 2016: 12 (see also Soldati 2008). Although see Prinz (2007, 56-60) who argues against the idea that the evaluative representation causes the somatic aspects.

However, although appealing, the view that at least non-reflexive emotions are transparent in the same way as paradigmatic sense-perceptual experience runs into a significant problem. Since even in the non-reflexive case there is a different kind of opacity in play, since emotions – on the perceptual model – involve what Goldie (2000, 58-83) calls “feelings towards”. Note, the issue here is not the alleged presence of a non-intentional somatic state, since such somatic states are not present, or at least not distinctly so, in at least some (“cool”) non-reflexive emotional experiences. Neither is it the presence of other subjective features of the experience; for example, awareness of expectations about features of the object that would come into view if I was to shift my physical location; expecting that if I was to look around the object I would see parts of it which I presently do not. Such expectations, if present at all, plausibly also feature in typical sense-perceptual experience (Siegel 2010, 175-82).

The problem is that in emotional experience (both reflexive and non-reflexive) there is always some kind of feeling of approval or disapproval in the uptake of the value content, and therefore the relevant kind of intentionality is, according to prominent versions of the perceptual model, affective intentionality (Döring 2007; 2014; Poellner 2007; 2016; Johnston 2001). This feeling of approval or disapproval is best described as a felt valenced attitude towards the particular object of the emotion which, although experienced as registering (as representing) the evaluative standing of that object, is neither presented in experience as a characteristic of the object, nor would a report of an emotional experience describe it as such. However, it is clearly an essential part of the phenomenal character of emotional experience, and is connected to that feature which is commonly characterized as *valence*. So, although in a description of the non-reflexive emotion of aesthetic admiration I might (mostly, perhaps sometimes exclusively) point to apparent evaluative features of the painting, I would also need to refer to my “feelings towards” the object. In other words, I would not just pick out value properties, but pick out those properties as experienced in terms of my felt valenced attitude (“approval”) toward the painting.

So, it seems for emotional experience, intentionality has an intrinsic link to a specifically *valenced* phenomenology, whereas in typical sense perceptual experience there is no valenced attitude of a “feeling towards” a “red and rectangular table” – it is right to say one does not necessarily approve or disapprove of anything in standard sense-perceptual experience. So, as Poellner (2016, 14) puts it, insofar as such valenced attitudes “are part of the phenomenal character of the emotion, that character therefore includes components that are not properties of the emotional target”.<sup>28</sup> If this is right, then all

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<sup>28</sup> It might be objected that once spelled out in this way, the analogy between sense-perceptual experience and emotional experience seems weaker. While the presence of valenced attitudes in emotional experience is a central disanalogy with standard sense-perceptual experience, we need not assume that for the analogy to hold emotional perception of value has to be like standard sense-perception in every respect. Moreover, if there are types of perception, such as perceptions of universals or causal relations (see Siegel 2010), then they are likely be certain

emotional experience is opaque in a different way to the opacity specific to reflexive emotions, the former opacity being intrinsically connected to its nature as a putative affective perception of value. I label this *valence opacity*, to signal the specific way emotional experience (at least on the perceptual model) is not transparent.

*(c) Normative why-questions and defeating situations*

This section explains why *reflexive opacity* and *valenced opacity* have a bearing on the epistemological standing of emotions, and how this has an impact on the prevalence of normative why-questions.

First, on *reflexive opacity*: I think because reflexive emotions lack the full transparency of (most) sense-perceptual experience, by involving self-concern at their forefront, they are more open to potentially distorting subjective factors in a way that significantly extends the range of possible defeating situations. For example, as discussed above, if fear involves an apprehension of an object as *dangerous for me*, then it involves an evaluative self-apprehension, such that one is taken to be in need of protection from the (apparent) danger. So, an awareness of a relation between the valued self and the object is part of the emotion – I specified this earlier as the claim that self-concern is embedded in the intentional content of the reflexive emotional experience. In virtue of this, there is an additional way fear, for example, can “get things wrong”. For I might not only misapprehend the evaluative qualities of the object of the emotion, its being dangerous or not, but also the potential danger the object poses to me, i.e. whether it can specifically do me harm.

We can explicate this point further by noting that meeting the satisfaction conditions for a reflexive emotion, where the evaluative content approximates to “X is dangerous for me”, requires getting right not only an objects’ evaluative standing, but one’s own evaluative standing in relation to it. For example, presumably one of the reasons a normative why-question concerning someone’s fear of a house spider is appropriate, is because while house spiders may well be dangerous for house flies, they are not usually dangerous for human beings, and so it seems the subject’s self-concern – perhaps relating to a certain pathology about spiders – is having a distorting effect on their ability to see this relation aright. In this sense, reflexive emotions – due to their specific kind of opacity – have a wider range of ways there might be mistakes, distortions, and deceptions, and as such the range of possible bad cases, or defeating situations, is more extensive than in (1) typical sense-perceptual experience and (2) non-reflexive emotions.

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respects different from standard sense-perception of particulars, without therefore undermining the claim that they are kinds of perceptions, or at least analogous to them.

So, *reflexive opacity* has an epistemological impact, and we can see how this connects to, and explains, the prevalence of normative why-questions in these cases. Nevertheless, although we might be more sceptical about whether an emotional experience like fear, for example, can ever constitute a conclusive reason for evaluative belief, given the increased range of possible defeating situations, this does not license the conclusions that (1) reflexive emotions can *never* conclusively justify evaluative beliefs, and (2) all emotions lack the resources for such justification. A heuristic point is therefore worth bearing in mind. We do best not to take reflexive emotions as paradigmatic cases, and since Brady often appeals to fear, he moves too quickly from a specific disanalogy between sense-perceptual experience and reflexive emotional experiences (which involve *reflexive opacity*) to an alleged epistemological disanalogy in all cases.<sup>29</sup>

However, as noted, there is a disanalogy between the intentional modes of sense-perceptual experience and emotional experience, with the latter being an affective kind of intentionality, and so involving *valenced opacity*. I think the presence of *valenced opacity* in emotional experience also has a role to play in explaining the prevalence of normative why-questions in the case of emotional experience.

Clearly, there is a sense in which due to involving a directed “feeling towards”, emotional experience is more complex than paradigmatic sense perceptual experience. We might put this by saying emotional experience involves at least one thing that standard sense-perceptual experience does not, namely felt attitudes of approval or disapproval. With this added dimension, there is the risk of additional ways things can go wrong, in other words, again a wider range of possible “bad cases” and defeating situations. In this sense, the prevalence of normative why-questions for emotional experience quite generally might be a reflection of this added complexity, of its involving a felt valenced attitude. Yet, as above, the possibility of more defeating situations does not, by itself, motivate moving from the prevalence of normative why-questions to the conclusion that emotional experience is *never* a conclusive reason for evaluative belief. Although it suggests such a thing is a rarer achievement in emotional experience than in standard sense-perceptual experience. In other words, there may be fewer good cases, and they may be harder to determine, but nonetheless the good cases still exist.<sup>30</sup>

Let me sum up the different strands of response to Brady’s first argument. First, I argued in subsection (a) that we need not think normative why-questions are always appropriate, since there seem to

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<sup>29</sup> This discussion points towards the broader point that we should not necessarily expect the epistemology of all types of emotions to be identical, in other words *not all emotions are created epistemologically equal*, since as we have seen the appropriateness of normative why-questions seems to have more traction in the case of reflexive emotions, specifically fear, than in other cases. For further discussion of this kind of disparity, see Todd 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Adam Pelser (2014) develops a similar response to Brady, highlighting how the putative lack of trust we might have in certain emotions does not undermine their epistemic role in general (see also Poellner 2016, 20).

be cases where this claim is not true and the emotion shows up in experience as sufficiently justified. Secondly (b-c); one explanation for the prevalence of normative why-questions as a feature of our emotional lives is the various ways emotional experience, in being opaque in a reflexive and a valenced sense, extends the range of possible defeating situations – of so-called “bad cases”. This can be true without there being a disanalogy across all cases between the epistemic roles of sense-perceptual and emotional experience to the extent of there never being “good cases” for emotions – cases in which we currently possess conclusive (undefeated) warrant. In fact, section (a) seems to show that such cases can and do exist.

Nevertheless, a different explanation for the prevalence of normative why-questions for emotions is simply that emotional disagreement is more prevalent.<sup>31</sup> However, we cannot leave it at that, since we need an explanation of this emotional disagreement. At least in the case of reflexive emotions, what has been said here provides one explanation of that phenomenon: in those emotions where self-concern is at the forefront, the range of possible defeating situations is extended along the vector of disagreement about whether or not we have misrepresented the relation between the emotional object and ourselves. In a more general way, the *valence opacity* of most emotional experience adds a complexity that is not present in sense-perceptual experience. And it is little more than a truism to say that when we increase complexity we should expect more possible defeating situations and, relatedly, more disagreement about those defeating situations and whether they do defeat the reasons in question.

## **5. Content Externalism and Epistemic Appropriateness**

### *(a) Preliminaries*

We are now in a position to consider Brady’s second argument against the PJV. He claims that if we appeal to emotional experience as a reason for evaluative belief then emotions become problematically self-justifying, and since emotions cannot (even provisionally) justify themselves we should give up the claim that emotions can be any sort of reason for corresponding evaluative beliefs.

A key component of Brady’s second argument is a version of S-theories about evaluative concepts. So, one might respond by rejecting S-theories. Yet, they arguably provide us with a plausible account of what it means to be a competent user of evaluative concepts. However, we can challenge Brady’s

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<sup>31</sup> This alternative was suggested by an anonymous referee. Another explanation might draw on the idea that values are higher-order properties, which are dependent on lower-order properties. Like other higher-order properties in perception that are dependent on lower-order properties, e.g. seeing a smile as malicious on the basis of certain facial features, it makes sense in those cases to ask a normative why-question, like “why do you see that smile as malicious”. This is because, as Poellner (2016, 20) puts it “we are [or can be] in doubt whether some of the relevant lower-level properties really are instantiated and, therefore whether the experience is veridical”. This is plausible, and suggests there may be various complementary explanations for the prevalence of normative why-questions with regard to emotions.

argument, and its reliance on S-theories, by noting the way they only give us part of the story when it comes to the notion of appropriateness. In what follows, I argue a certain kind of epistemic appropriateness can be part of an emotional experience, such that it is a mistake to think appropriateness is never part of the experience but always requires a judgement about it. However, seeing how requires a more detailed understanding of emotional experience and its evaluative content than has been given so far.

Sabine Döring (2014, 133) makes suggestive comments on this issue, claiming we can distinguish between an evaluative judgement like X is dangerous, which is assessable as true or false because “its content is regarded as true by the subject” and an emotional experience, the evaluative content of which is a non-propositional construal involving an appearance of truth; “it seems the gorilla is *in fact* fearsome, whether or not he would *affirm* the truth of his emotion’s content in judgement”. So, Döring claims emotional experience, in terms of its evaluative (re)presentational content, does involve some kind of awareness of epistemic appropriateness, which should be understood in terms of its putting “forward this content as true”.<sup>32</sup> This way of thinking about the evaluative content of emotional experience is significant because of the analogy with sense-perception, since sense-perceptual experience involves, in its default mode, an appearance of truth, or actuality, of its (re)presented objects (McDowell, 1998). However, these comments are primarily suggestive – in what follows I spell them out.

#### (b) *Content externalism*

It should be kept in mind that the representational evaluative content of emotional experience has, at the basic level, mind-to-world direction of fit.<sup>33</sup> We can gloss this by saying that emotions (re)present their objects as independently being a certain evaluative way. Therefore, the evaluative contents of those experiences are, at the phenomenological level, external; or as McDowell (2013a, 147) puts it in the sense-perceptual case, such experiences bring an “environmental [in our case evaluative] reality into view”. Hence it is at best imprecise to say that the fact I was afraid of the dog constitutes a reason for the evaluative belief that it is dangerous. This could be taken as just referencing some subjective internal psychological state I am undergoing as an explanation of my holding the evaluative belief, and when framed in this way Brady’s second argument seems compelling. That I am in a certain state, namely fear – so understood – does not seem like the kind of thing that could provide any kind of justification for the evaluative belief that something is dangerous. Yet, what might provide a *prima facie*

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<sup>32</sup> Tappolet (2011, 130) also gestures towards this kind of epistemic understanding of appropriateness in her characterization of what she calls “epistemic neo-sentimentalism”.

<sup>33</sup> See Searle 1983 on directions of fit.

reason is an experience of the object of one's fear as being a certain evaluative way, as (apparently) dangerous, which (re)presents an external evaluative-environmental reality.<sup>34</sup>

Further reflection on this point yields the following view. It is plausible that for an evaluative property to be experienced as qualifying the particular object of an emotion, the emotion must necessarily (re)present its objects' evaluative standing as independent of that particular experience of it. In this way a certain kind of content externalism implies phenomenal objectivity with regard to that evaluative standing, and this is necessary if at least some emotional experiences have value properties as part of their intentional content.<sup>35</sup> To make this clearer, consider that on this view having an emotional experience of aesthetic admiration, for example, which has as its object an (apparently) beautiful painting, can count as a case of being presented with an evaluative property, beauty, that seems to be, in McDowell's (1985, 213) way of putting it, "there anyway – independent of the experience".<sup>36</sup> This mirrors how in sense-perception "an experience of something as red can count as a case of being presented with a property that is there anyway – independent of the experience", and therefore as available for re-presentation as the same on different occasions by myself and others (given suitable conditions).

*(c) Epistemic appropriateness and rational intelligibility*

With this understanding of the evaluative content of emotional experience in place we can make clearer sense of how emotional experience can (*contra* Brady) involve an awareness of epistemic appropriateness, and can do so without becoming self-justifying. To see how, we need to make a distinction based on the above, and one not made by Brady or S-theories, between judged appropriateness and awareness of the epistemic appropriateness of one's emotional response. The former is claimed by S-theories to be involved in the competent use of evaluative concepts, which is brought into play when we hold propositional attitudes, like beliefs, about the objects of emotions. The latter is an awareness as of epistemic appropriateness which arguably can be present in emotional experience, such that an emotional response can be experienced as merited by, as epistemically appropriate to, the way its object brings a specific evaluative-environmental reality into view.

However, what is the exact form of this experience of epistemic appropriateness? It does not seem typical of emotional experiences that they have an awareness of their own appropriateness "tacked on", as an awareness – distinct from the emotion – which indicates that the emotion is justified (even if not

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<sup>34</sup> See also Deonna and Teroni 2012, 101.

<sup>35</sup> See Poellner, 2007 for more on phenomenal objectivity.

<sup>36</sup> Todd (2012, 99-102) suggests that this "apparent objectivity" may differ for different types of emotions depending on the degree to which "SEC sensitive" factors (see fn.26) are present. - subjective evaluative conditions

conclusively). Rather, given what was said above, the object of the emotion is its particular object evaluatively qualified – as instantiating the relevant determinate evaluative property – *not* the emotion itself. So, we might wonder how it is that an awareness of epistemic appropriateness is a feature of emotions as a first-order mental phenomena, rather than something which requires a reflective judgement or attitude, separate from the emotional experience, which does take the emotion as its object.

Section 4 argued that emotional experience involves *valence opacity*, such that it is an essential part of the phenomenal character of emotional experience that there is an affective feeling of approval or disapproval which serves as an uptake of the value content. This was understood as a valenced attitude towards the object, which although experienced as registering (and so representing) the relevant value, is not presented in experience as a characteristic of the object. In fact, what is arguably given as epistemically appropriate in some emotional experiences, as a first-order mental phenomenon, is this valenced attitude, the felt approval or disapproval; since this valenced attitude is felt to be appropriate to – is experienced as an epistemically appropriate uptake of – the content-external (apparent) evaluative standing of the emotion's object. In Poellner's (2016, 6) characterization, the valenced attitude is experienced as "*intelligibly* motivated by features of the object itself".<sup>37</sup>

The claim is not that all emotions necessarily involve an experience of their felt valenced attitude as epistemically appropriate to their object's evaluative standing in this way. Consider a certain type of arachnophobic whose felt disapproval (repulsion) towards a spider might not be experienced as merited by evaluative features of the object – as epistemically appropriate to it in this sense – but merely as habitually caused by it. What is partly characteristic of such cases is that the felt valenced attitude – and so the fear – is rationally unintelligible to the subject with respect to features of the object – hence we tend to describe them as emotional pathologies, and this is due to that feature of the experience. So, the claim is that awareness of the epistemic appropriateness of one's felt valenced attitude, to what are experienced as content-external evaluative properties of the emotion's object, is essential to those emotional experiences which are *intrinsically* rationally intelligible to us. Without experiencing the relevant value property, say danger, and in virtue of this experiencing one's felt disapproval as epistemically appropriate – as a merited uptake or registering of that value property – that fear would not be immediately rationally intelligible; it would lack what Mark Johnston (2001, 181-214) calls ready intelligibility.<sup>38</sup> In other words, my experience of fear would not make immediate sense to me without an awareness of the appropriateness of the valenced attitude of felt disapproval as a response to the

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<sup>37</sup> Poellner, 2016 attributes a version of this view to Max Scheler, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

<sup>38</sup> There might be "truncated" emotional responses which do not fit this model, however all that is required for the view is that *intrinsically* rationally intelligible emotional experiences admit of this characterization.

(apparent) danger of the object.<sup>39</sup> Naturally, there might be different ways the emotional experience could *subsequently* be made intelligible; for example, I could later tell a certain explanatory story, giving evolutionary reasons for the emotion. But the experience would not intrinsically and immediately make sense to me if I lacked awareness of epistemic appropriateness as part of the emotional experience.

However, this seems incompatible with the claim, put forward by Deonna and Teroni (2012, 70), that emotions presuppose cognitive bases (i.e. judgements, perceptions etc.) of non-evaluative properties.<sup>40</sup> They argue against a central part of the above view, claiming that values are not part of the intentional content of emotions; they say (2012, 84) “evaluative properties are not what the emotions are about: these properties generally do not figure in the content of the emotions”. Rather, they claim emotions are felt bodily attitudes towards a non-evaluative content provided by their cognitive bases. Nevertheless, they claim an emotion can be correct *iff* the object of the emotion – accessed via the cognitive base – instantiates the relevant evaluative property and the subject is aware of the relevant subtending non-evaluative properties as a content apt to justify it (e.g. the painting, the brush work, the hues of colour etc.). Given this, they argue (2012, 76-87) for a strong supervenience relation between the non-evaluative properties, which the cognitive base makes present in emotional experience, and the relevant evaluative property, such that the relevant conjunction of those properties constitutes that evaluative property.

Yet on this basis, it makes sense to say (*pace* Deonna and Teroni) that in cases where the supervenience relationship holds, and the subject exercises the relevant recognitional capacity regarding all the non-evaluative (subtending) properties, the values do figure in the content of the emotion. This is because the latter are supposed to be constituted by those non-evaluative properties. If we are aware, through the relevant cognitive base, of the relevant complex conjunction of subtending non-evaluative properties, then we are also necessarily aware of the relevant supervenient evaluative property, since the evaluative property just is, for Deonna and Teroni, constituted by that complex conjunction of subtending non-evaluative properties (see Dokic and Lemaire 2015, 276-81).<sup>41</sup> Indeed, it is this awareness that – according to Deonna and Teroni – allows us to say the emotion is justified *iff* the relevant evaluative property is in fact present. So, for all intents and purposes, the evaluative standing of the object is what the emotional experience is *about*, and so evaluative properties do figure in their intentional content.

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<sup>39</sup> See also Tappolet 2011, 125.

<sup>40</sup> See also Mulligan 1998.

<sup>41</sup> This view of the connection between the emotion and its cognitive base is what Cowan (2016) calls the “complex” view, as opposed to the “simple” view according to which emotions are mediated states.

However, in qualification of the above picture, it is implausible to think, in all cases, I need be distinctly aware of all these subtending non-evaluative properties on which the evaluative property (putatively) supervenes in all the required specificity. Rather, I can often be distinctly aware of the presence of a determinate evaluative property as qualifying a particular object, say the beauty of a painting or the sadness of a particular scene in a film, without a corresponding distinct awareness of the specific conjunction of subtending properties. In other words, the relevant “formal object” of many emotions seems to show up in experience as an awareness of the supervenient evaluative property, *not* the specific conjunction of subtending non-evaluative properties.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, in many cases discipline-specific theory (art criticism, film criticism) is partly a matter of highlighting the relevant subtending properties of which we did not previously possess a distinct awareness, but nonetheless we did have a distinct awareness of the relevant evaluative property. In any case, there is no obvious barrier to thinking emotions are, in some sense, dependent on their cognitive bases – that there are such non-evaluative features, perhaps sometimes detected by sub-personal information processing systems of the subject – *and* holding that in many cases it is the *evaluative* content of the emotional experience that is presented as the external content, rather than just non-evaluative features. Indeed, given what was said above, it needs to be presented in this way to account for the intrinsic rational intelligibility of many emotional experiences.

Arguably, the presence of a sense of epistemic appropriateness, as characterized above, can also account (at least in part) for the intrinsic rational intelligibility of the motivational component of many emotional experiences. In a good number of cases there is plausibly a relation of dependence between my emotion being experienced as epistemically appropriate to evaluative features of its object, on the basis of my felt valenced attitude, and in virtue of this the experience providing me with reasons for action. In those cases where the emotion includes a motivational component, it makes sense to say the intrinsic rational intelligibility of being motivated to do something, to take action – regardless of whether one does, there might be other, more stringent, reasons for not acting – is dependent on one’s felt valenced attitude first being experienced as epistemically appropriate to evaluative features of its object.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Poellner 2016, 9, makes a similar point.

<sup>43</sup> On “action readiness” in emotions see Deonna and Teroni (2012, 79), see also Kovach and Lancey 2005; Döring 2007. Tappolet (2011, 123-125) appears to agree with the view just stated when she says “values give us reasons to act” (cf. Scanlon 1998). The considerations voiced here might go some of the way to meeting the explanatory challenge set by Schroeter *et al* (2015, 373) when they say “we need to know what explanatory advantage there is in supposing that the phenomenology of fear functions as a vehicle that attributes [evaluative] properties to those targets”.

(d) *Response to Brady and summary*

The above discussion should persuade us that, *pace* Brady and S-theories, awareness of the epistemic appropriateness of an emotional experience is not the same as a reflective judgment of appropriateness. A sense of epistemic appropriateness can be part of emotional experience. Indeed, it is a necessary part of intrinsically rationally intelligible emotional experience as an experience of value.

Analogously with sense-perceptual experience, this distinction poses no barrier to emotional experience being appealed to, and understood as, a source of *prima facie* reasons for evaluative belief. There is no more problematic self-justification in an individual's citing their emotion as a *prima facie* reason for evaluative belief than an individual's citing their sense-perceptual experience as a *prima facie* reason for empirical belief. I have argued this is so insofar as emotional experience involves an awareness of the epistemic appropriateness of one's valenced attitude – a felt approval or disapproval – as picking up on content-external evaluative features of its object. It is this awareness which would provide provisional justification for the subject holding relevant evaluative beliefs on the basis of emotional experience.

In sum, appealing to emotional experience as a *prima facie* reason for evaluative belief only appears to be problematically self-justifying if we fail to understand the following. (1): emotional experience, in its default mode in which we do not question its veridicality, (re)presents evaluative properties as properties of objects, and so (re)presents those properties as independent of any particular emotional state the subject happens to be undergoing – as content-external. (2): in connection with (1), emotional experience involves an awareness of one's valenced attitude, the felt approval or disapproval, as an epistemically appropriate, and so intrinsically intelligible, uptake of those content-external (apparent) evaluative features of the object. Once we understand (1) and (2) as true of at least some emotions, the PJV is in much better shape.

### **Conclusion**

In this article, I have argued that once understood along perceptualist lines we can make sense of how emotional experiences can provide reasons for evaluative belief (the PJV). However, this view was open to two counter arguments. I have articulated responses to these arguments, showing them to rely on misunderstandings about emotional experience. The hope is that this article has shown that despite recent criticism, there is still much to be learned about the epistemology of emotional experience by drawing analogies with perceptual experience.

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