ABSTRACT

Emotion, Evaluative Perception, and Epistemic Goods

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In contrast to the widely held view that emotions are obstacles to ideal epistemic functioning, emotions, as evaluative perceptual states, can contribute in significant ways to our achievement of valuable epistemic goods including justified beliefs, understanding, and wisdom. That emotions are evaluative perceptual states – call this the *perceptual thesis of emotion* – is evidenced by the extent of the structural and functional parallels between emotions and sense perceptions. Emotions, like sense perceptions, can be both original and acquired and are distinct from the sensory inputs that give rise to them; they also resemble sense perceptions in being passive, intentional mental states with propositional content and they are sources of belief, while yet not themselves beliefs.

Emotion also functions in parallel ways to sense perception with respect to the achievement of epistemic justification. Emotions, like their sense perceptual analogues, can and do function as justifying reasons or evidence for beliefs – call this the *justificatory thesis of emotion*. The justificatory thesis of emotion best explains plausible cases of justified beliefs formed on the basis of emotional experience, as well as the fact that we enjoy justification for evaluative beliefs bearing conceptual content indicative of

emotional experience. Moreover, the justificatory thesis is not undermined by any of the strongest objections raised against it; namely, that emotions seem too unreliable to justify beliefs, that emotions themselves can be justified, and that we rarely cite emotions as our reasons for believing as we do.

In another significant epistemic parallel between emotion and sense perception, emotional experience is necessary for the best and deepest human understanding of value just as sense perceptual experience is necessary for the best and deepest human understanding of the physical world.

Emotion as evaluative perception is also essential to our achievement and actualization of wisdom. Wisdom is deep, appreciative ontological understanding of that which is good (i.e., the proper objects of wonder) and it essentially involves virtuous concerns and emotion-dispositions. Indeed, not only is our initial pursuit of wisdom often prompted by an emotional experience (e.g., wonder), wisdom is also partially constituted by and initially exemplified in virtuous emotional perceptions of value.

Emotion, Evaluative Perception, and Epistemic Goods

by

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To Katie and Luke David
with love

CHAPTER ONE

Emotion and Evaluative Perception

Recent work in the philosophy of emotions has been marked by the development of two significant trends. First, the past few decades have seen a significant rise in interest in perceptual accounts of emotions. Contemporary emotion theory has been marked, secondly, by a quickly growing literature on the epistemology of emotions. The simultaneous development of these two trends is not coincidental. Given the central importance of sense perception as a paradigmatic source of belief and contributor to justification, knowledge, and understanding in epistemology, understanding emotions as perceptual states has obvious and important implications for the epistemology of emotions. In fact, the recent rise in popularity of perceptual accounts of emotions seems at least partially explainable by the desire among theorists to explain our knowledge of value by reference to a faculty of evaluative perception, together with the recognition that emotion is a prime candidate for such a faculty.[1] As Michael Brady puts it, it seems that "part of the point of the perceptual model [of emotions] is to provide an adequate epistemology for our knowledge of value."[2] It is indeed telling that current interest in

[1] One notable exception to this trend is Graham Oddie who argues that desires and not emotions are the best candidates for perceptions of the value of states of affairs (Oddie, *Value, Reality, and Desire* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005]).

[2] Michael Brady, "Emotions, Perceptions, and Reasons," in Carla Bagnoli, ed., *Morality and the Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

perceptual accounts of emotions is often traced back to Ronald de Sousa's pioneering work on the epistemology of emotions in his *The Rationality of Emotion*.[3]

In this dissertation I shall engage these two closely related trends in emotion theory. In sharp contrast to the popular view, which Catherine Elgin has called "the standard view," that emotions and rationality are antithetical, I contend that emotions, understood as evaluative perceptual states, can contribute positively to our achievement of valuable epistemic goods including justification, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. I argue, moreover, that some important cognitive achievements are not possible apart from emotional perception.

Despite significant disagreements over the nature of emotional perception, a growing number of philosophers and psychologists agree that emotion is a perceptual faculty. Robert Roberts has defended the view that emotions are perception-like construals of situations based in the concerns of agents, or 'concern-based construals,' while Jesse Prinz argues that emotions are perceptions of bodily changes, or 'embodied appraisals.'[4] Despite stopping short of defending the claim that emotions are perceptions, in his influential work *The Rationality of Emotion* Ronald de Sousa argues that emotions share many of the characteristic features of paradigmatic (sense) perceptions.[5] Other recent defenders of perceptual accounts of emotions include Linda Zagzebski, Catherine

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[3] Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987). Prinz argues that, despite de Sousa's referring to emotions as "modes of perceiving," de Sousa's theory of emotions is not properly understood as a perceptual account after all (Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotions* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004], 222-3).

[4] Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Prinz, *Gut Reactions*.

[5] de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*.

Elgin, Sabine Döring, Mark Johnston, and Christine Tappolet, not to mention several authors in the literature on moral perception who appeal to an important role for emotions (often discussed under the term 'sentiments') in human perception of the moral properties of actions and agents.[6] While there has been a noticeable rise in interest in perceptual accounts of emotions in recent years, the view that emotion is perceptual has roots that run deep in the history of philosophy. Prinz finds the seeds of his perceptual account of emotions in the thought of Descartes.[7] Tracing the view that emotion is perceptual even further back, Martha Nussbaum, Hilary Putnam and Deborah Achtenberg have noted that emotion is for Aristotle a characteristically evaluative kind of perception.[8]

In what follows I shall lend support to this tradition, developing and defending the claim that emotions are evaluative perceptual states. I begin in this first chapter by considering some of the oft-cited parallels between emotions and paradigmatic sense perceptions. I will also consider some parallels between emotions and sense perceptions that have received little or no attention in recent literature. Here, I employ some helpful

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[6] Linda Zagzebski, *Divine Motivation Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. ch. 2; Catherine Z. Elgin "Emotion and Understanding," in Brün, Doguoglu, and Kuenzle, eds., *Epistemology and Emotions* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 33-49; Sabine Döring, "Explaining Action by Emotion," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (2003): 214-30; Mark Johnston, "The Authority of Affect," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 53 (2001): 181-214; Christine Tappolet, "Ambivalent emotions and the perceptual account of emotions," *Analysis* 65 (2005): 229-33.

[7] Prinz, *Gut Reactions*, 224.

[8] Martha Nussbaum and Hilary Putnam, "Changing Aristotle's Mind," in Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, eds., *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), see esp. p.44; Deborah Achtenberg, *Cognition of Value in Aristotle's Ethics*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), see esp. ch. 6. Incidentally, Robert Roberts and Linda Zagzebski, among others, take their perceptual analyses of emotions to be developments of Aristotle's view. In chapter four I shall argue in favor of this interpretation of Aristotle on emotion.

resources gleaned from Thomas Reid's seminal work on perception. Along the way I will explain why some apparently essential differences between emotions and sense perceptions do not undermine my thesis. I will conclude the chapter by considering the relationship of desires to emotions. I argue that even if desires also involve (or simply are) evaluative perceptual states, this does not undermine the thesis that emotions are evaluative perceptual states.

1. Emotion and Perception

Before proceeding to an analysis of the parallels between emotions and sense perceptions, a note of clarification is in order. My primary intent in this chapter (and one of my primary aims in this dissertation) is to defend the claim that emotions are perceptual mental states – call this *the perceptual thesis of emotion* or, for brevity's sake, *the perceptual thesis*. Along the way I will also offer support for my preferred perceptual account of emotion, but one need not agree with my *perceptual account* of emotion in order to accept *the perceptual thesis* I defend. The perceptual thesis can be understood as the claim that whatever features are essential to perception, emotions share those features with paradigmatic sense perceptions. In support of this thesis, I will highlight the features of sense perception and emotion that seem to be the best candidates for essential features of perception. I will not attempt to delineate the necessary and sufficient conditions for a state's being perceptual; rather, I will consider several distinctive features of perception and show that these features are exemplified by emotions as well as sense perceptions. These features plausibly include all of the essential features of perception, though some of the features considered are likely non-essential, but nevertheless reveal important similarities between emotion and sense perception. In

considering the important parallels between emotion and sense perception, I cannot help but reveal my preference for an analysis of emotions and an analysis of perception that together make up my perceptual account of emotions. Nevertheless, the perceptual thesis I defend necessarily depends neither on my preferred analysis of emotions nor on my preferred analysis of sense perception, though I do take it that my perceptual account of emotions lends plausibility to the perceptual thesis.

So, for example, I shall argue below that while both emotions and sense perceptions are sources of belief, neither emotions nor sense perceptions are essentially beliefs. One might, however, reject both claims, siding with judgment theorists on emotion like Robert Solomon and Martha Nussbaum, and with the defenders of doxastic theories of sense perception, such as Thomas Reid and, more recently, John Heil and D.M. Armstrong, without rejecting the perceptual thesis of emotion.[9] For, if both emotions and sense perceptions were essentially beliefs, this would count in favor of, and not against, the perceptual thesis.

The perceptual thesis' lack of dependence on my perceptual account of emotions will be especially important to keep in mind as we consider the relationships between emotions and epistemic goods in the chapters to follow. Much of my case for the positive roles of emotion in our achievement and enjoyment of epistemic goods does not depend on my particular perceptual account of emotions and, when it does, it often only

[9] Robert C. Solomon, *A Passion for Justice: Emotions and the Origins of the Social Contract* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1990); Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, ed. Baruch Brody (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, [1785] 1969); John Heil, "Seeing is Believing," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1982): 229-39; D.M. Armstrong, *Perception and the Physical World* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1961).

depends on certain features of my account and not others. In fact, as I shall argue, far from depending entirely on a particular perceptual account of emotions, my case for the positive epistemic functions of emotion actually lends (non-circular) support to the perceptual thesis of emotion, compatible as it is with varying perceptual accounts of emotions. Keeping this in mind, let us now consider the various significant parallels between emotion and sense perception.

1.1 Passivity

One characteristic feature of paradigmatic sense perceptions is that they are, at least to some degree, passive responses to their objects. When one opens one's eyes and looks around at one's surroundings, one simply finds oneself having visual perceptions of the objects in one's visual field. Of course, some activity on the part of the agent might seem necessary for visual perception. She must open her eyes and look, after all. Yet, once having opened her eyes and looked, she simply finds herself with perceptions. The passivity of sense perception is perhaps even more pronounced in olfactory and auditory perceptions. As I write I cannot help but hear the sound of my neighbor's lawnmower. Likewise, as I step outside it takes no effort on my part to smell the sweet aroma of the honeysuckles in my backyard. I do not have to try to perceive these objects any more than I have to try to keep my fingers out of my ears or to breathe through my nose. Perhaps if my attention were focused intensely on some other object(s) I might temporarily fail to perceive the mower and the honeysuckles. The fact that my activity in attention can prevent my having perceptions I might otherwise have, however, does not show that my perceptions, when I do in fact have them, are caused solely or even

primarily by my activity; rather, given the satisfaction of certain background conditions for perception (discussed below), they simply happen to me.

Emotions likewise come to us without our having to 'activate' them (though we do sometimes engage in practices aimed at indirectly 'activating' emotions). No amount of effort is needed to feel fear toward a perceived threat to one's life or the safety of those one loves – the fear simply comes. Similarly, when I am insulted, I do not have to engage in any activity to conjure up anger – the anger simply comes (often even if I do not want to become angry). Indeed, it is common to speak of anger as 'flaring up' and of jealousy as a 'monster' as though these passions are forces not under our direct control that act upon us. And it is not just the negative emotions that exhibit this feature. The passivity of emotion is also evident in experiences of joy, elation, gratitude, awe, etc. This conceptual link between the emotions and passivity is especially highlighted by the common synonymic use of "emotion" and "passion."

It might be thought, however, that the passivity of emotion is different from the passivity of sense perception in such a way as to undermine this apparent parallel. Martha Nussbaum argues that "the experience of passivity in emotion is well explained by the fact that the objects of emotion are things and people whose activities and well-being we do not ourselves control, and in whom we have invested a good measure of our own well-being."[10] Nussbaum here seems to suggest that the passivity of emotion consists in (or, less plausibly, is caused by) our inability to control how things we care about go in the world. This would amount to an important difference between emotion and sense perception since it seems that the passivity of sense perception consists in the

[10] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 78.

absence of active control we typically exert over the world's effects on our sense organs and, through them, our cognition, regardless of whether we actively control or care about what happens in the world. While Nussbaum is correct that we only experience emotions toward objects or situations about which we have some concern, desire, or care (more on this below), the passivity of emotion does not consist in this. Nor does it consist in our inability to control the objects of our emotions. Rather, like the passivity of sense perception, the passivity of emotion consists in our typical lack of active control over the world's effects on our emotional states. In other words, emotions are passive not because they typically involve or are caused by an agent's lack of active control over the objects of emotion, but rather because emotions themselves are not typically objects of an agent's direct active control. Given our possession of certain capacities, both natural and acquired, including capacities for sense perception and imagination, and given our possession of concerns, we simply find ourselves responding emotionally to objects in the world.

Here an important qualification is in order. In arguing that emotions are passive, I do not intend to suggest that they are purely passive or receptive. Just as we can distract (actively) our focus such that we fail to have certain sense perceptions, so too we can employ methods of distraction that enable us to avoid having certain unwanted emotions. And just as we can focus our attention on some object of sense perception, thereby prolonging and even enhancing our perception of the object, so too we can focus

(actively) our attention on the objects of our emotions, thereby sustaining and even enhancing our emotional perception.[11]

1.2 Intentionality

In addition to being passive, perceptions are paradigmatically intentional mental states. That is, perceptions are *of* or *about* objects. In fact, the passivity of perception just is the passivity of perceiving subjects in the perceptual formation of mental images or representations of perceptual objects. It is widely held that the objects of veridical sense perceptions are existing material objects, causally responsible in some significant way for the perceiver's perceptual experience.[12] Of course, the prevalence of illusions, hallucinations, and more mundane misperceptions in human experience suggests that there are also nonveridical perceptual experiences. In some such cases, there is a perceptual object that is simply misperceived, as when one hears an oboe as a clarinet, or sees a white object as blue under blue lighting. In other cases, however, there may be no object in the world causally responsible for the experience. Despite initial appearances, cases such as these do not undermine the claim that perception is essentially intentional. For, perception is a success term. In cases where no object is causally responsible for an agent's experience, we do not say that the agent perceives, but that she seems to perceive, however phenomenally similar her perception may be to a parallel veridical perception. Moreover, the intentionality of perception can be seen even in hallucinations, in that part

[11] I thus follow Zagzebski in calling emotions "states" in a broad sense (as opposed to the narrow sense according to which states and activities are mutually exclusive categories) so as not to preclude the possibility that emotions involve some activity on the part of their agents (*Divine Motivation Theory*, 71).

[12] Cf., H.P. Grice, "The Causal Theory of Perception," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 35 (1961): 121-53, on the causal theory of perception.

of the reason for the temptation to take such an experience to be a perception is that it purports to present (or represent) some object to its subject.

Like sense perceptions, emotions are intentional states. They too take objects. It might be argued that some emotions, e.g., depression, general anxiety, elation, objectless delight, etc., do not seem to take objects or be about anything at all.[13] Such mental states are indeed similar to emotions in some ways and often predispose their subjects to certain emotional experiences. They are, nevertheless, better understood as moods than as emotions, since they are more akin structurally and phenomenologically to states such as cantankerousness, cheerfulness, and lightheartedness than they are to emotions such as anger, sorrow, and joy. The distinction between emotions and moods is occasionally blurred because we use the same term to describe an emotion and a mood. We might say, for example, that a student is depressed about the poor grade she earned and that she is simply depressed. Her depression about her grade is episodic and intentional and has propositional content (more on this below), while her general depression is a lingering, undirected, feeling of being "down" or a general, persevering lack of positive, uplifting emotions such as hope and joy. Although we might call them by the same name, only the former is an emotion proper. I shall accordingly reserve my use of the term 'emotion' for specific mental episodes that take objects.[14]

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[13] In fact, Irving Thalberg argued that there are some emotion types that, by their very nature, never take objects ("Emotion and Thought," *American Philosophical Quarterly* I [1964]: 45-55).

[14] See Roberts, *Emotions*, 64, and Roger Lamb, "Objectless Emotions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 48 (1987): 107-9, for support for the emotion/mood distinction along the lines of intentionality. Although Lamb is willing to allow that some objectless moods can also be emotions, this seems arbitrary. Roberts is more consistent in treating all such moods as distinct from emotions due to their non-episodic, non-intentional character.

The objects of emotions are typically, if not always, situated (or situational) objects. That is, we rarely, if ever, experience emotions toward objects without regard for some situational context in which the object sits. This is not always so for sense perceptions. While it makes sense to say that I see, smell, or taste an orange, it does not make sense, except as shorthand for a longer situational narrative, to say that I am joyful, grateful, or angry about an orange. I might be joyful about the first ripening of an orange on the newly planted orange tree in my backyard, or puzzled about the process of the orange's growth, or disgusted by the sight of a rotten orange, or grateful to my wife for giving me an orange to eat for lunch, or angry that my brother ate the last orange, which I had been saving for later. Notice that in each of these scenarios, the object of my emotion is experienced as situated within some context with multiple elements. Moreover, while the orange features prominently in the situational contexts that give rise to each of these emotions, it is perhaps only proper to speak of it as the object of my emotion in the first three examples (i.e., of my joy, puzzlement, and disgust). By contrast, the primary objects of my gratitude and anger seem to be people (i.e., my wife and brother, respectively) and in these cases the orange merely functions as a part of the situational context within which I experience them. In light of this feature of emotional experience, I follow Roberts in referring to the configuration of the elements relevant to a given emotional experience as the "situational object" of the emotion.[15]

1.3 Propositional Content and Construal

While it is controversial precisely how perceptions are of or about their objects, I take it that perceptions essentially contain propositional content and involve conceptual

[15] Roberts, *Emotions*, 78.

representations of their objects. Here I side with proponents of conceptualism about sense perception – roughly, the view that perceptual experiences essentially contain conceptual content grasped by the perceiving subject. John Bengson, Enrico Grube, and Daniel Korman, have recently provided compelling support for conceptualism by defending a neo-Reidian account of perception that enables a convincing conceptualist response to the most challenging objection to the view.[16]

Bengson, Grube, and Korman explain that the primary motivation for conceptualism lies in the pair of observations that perceptions are capable of justifying beliefs and that only a mental state with propositional content φ is capable of justifying a belief with propositional content φ. According to these authors, the primary challenge to conceptualism is the following argument from nonveridical experience. Given natural human limitations with respect to concept formation, many of the concepts we employ in perceptual experience are demonstrative concepts; for instance, not possessing the color concept red_{27}, when most people see a red_{27} object they do not conceive of, construe, or see the object as red_{27}, but rather as *that* color. Yet, in cases of illusion or hallucination, an agent might have a phenomenally identical experience without possessing the concept red_{27} and without there being an object that is red_{27} causing the experience (imagine there are no red_{27} objects in the world). In such a case, so the objection to conceptualism goes, neither the object of the experience, nor the content of the experience itself can fix the reference of *that* in the agent's demonstrative concept *that* color, since the object is not red_{27} and the agent has no concept red_{27}. Therefore, there seems to be no referent fixer for demonstrative concepts in some nonveridical experiences and the lack of a referent

[16] John Bengson, Enrico Grube, and Daniel Z. Korman, "A New Framework for Conceptualism," *Noûs* (forthcoming).

fixer in such cases reveals, so the non-conceptualist concludes, that some perceptual experiences do not have conceptual content.

Bengson, Grube, and Korman defend conceptualism against this objection by developing and defending a "new framework for conceptualism" the distinctive feature of which is a distinction between two components of perception, which the authors call respectively "sensory awareness" or simply "awareness" and "perceptual experience" or simply "experience." According to the authors, awareness is nonconceptual and, hence, nonpropositional, while experience essentially has propositional and, hence, conceptual content and involves only concepts grasped by the subject of the experience. As I suggested above when I referred to this account as neo-Reidian, it represents a development and application to contemporary debates of Reid's theory of perception. Incidentally, Bengson, Grube, and Korman do not identify their position as neo-Reidian, nor do they mention Reid at all. It nevertheless seems appropriate to refer to their "new framework for conceptualism" as neo-Reidian since the feature of their framework that does all of the interesting philosophical work on behalf of conceptualism – namely, their distinction between (non-conceptual/non-propositional) sensory awareness and (conceptual/propositional) perceptual experience – was prefigured by Reid's distinction between sensation and perception (or sensory and perceptual states).[17] Once having made this Reidian distinction, the threat of the challenge from nonveridical experience is

[17] A.D. Smith, highlights the significance of this distinction for Reid when he calls Reid one of the two most prominent defenders in the history of philosophy of a *dual-component theory* of perception (the other being Wilfrid Sellars) (Smith, *The Problem of Perception* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002], 69). For a helpful presentation of Reid's sensation/perception distinction, see James Van Cleve, "Reid's Theory of Perception," in Terence Cuneo and René Woudenberg, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 104-6.

easily eliminated. For, as Bengson, Grube, and Korman argue, it is possible for one to have a sensation as of red_{27} (in Bengson, Grube, and Korman's terminology, to be aware of the property red_{27}) without having the concept red_{27} and, hence, the sensation (or, awareness) can fix the referent of the demonstrative concept of a corresponding experience. So, in non-veridical perceptual experiences that involve a demonstrative concept, it is not the case that there can be no referent fixer for the concept. Sensation (or, sensory awareness) is capable of filling that role.

Emotions, like sense perceptions, have propositional content. I follow Roberts in his analysis of how it is that emotions are about their objects, viz., they are *construals* of their objects.[18] In much the way that sense perceptual experience essentially involves conceptual organization or construal of the objects of sensory awareness, emotional experience essentially involves construal of some (typically situational) object. A construal, as I am using the term here, is a propositionally structured apprehension, a 'seeing as,' or a 'taking' of an object in terms of certain concepts—material object concepts in the case of sense perception, and evaluative concepts in the case of emotional perception. As Roberts explains, this is a special use of the term construal, fit especially for perceptual construals: "The word 'construe' can be so used as to mean nothing more than interpret, thus not suggesting the experiential immediacy of perception. But in the somewhat special sense that I am commending, construing is perceptual in this broad

[18] For Roberts' seminal discussion of the construals characteristic of emotion, see *Emotions*, esp. ch. 2.

sense."[19] Consider, for example, the Gestalt duck-rabbit figure made famous by Wittgentstein[20]:

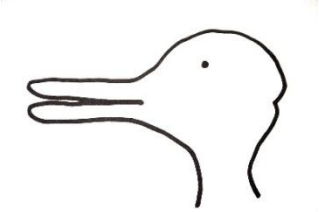

Figure 1. Duck-Rabbit

Without gaining any new sensations, one who initially can see the drawing only as a duck can learn to construe the duck-rabbit as a rabbit. Moreover, once one believes that the drawing is a duck-rabbit, one gains no new beliefs when one switches between construals. That it is possible to switch between construals without a change in (Reidian) sensation (i.e., the mere visual appearance of the lines does not change) or the generation of any new beliefs, reveals that there is another mental state operative in perception besides belief (or judgment) and sensation. This is the mental state I am calling construal.

As Roberts has convincingly argued, emotions essentially involve a distinctively perceptual kind of construal, though the construals involved in emotion are not essentially linked to sensory experience the way sense perceptual construals are. Roberts explains, "the person who feels triumphant is not merely judging that he is triumphant, but is 'perceiving' himself as such, yet without this experience being constituted of any

[19] Roberts, *Emotions*, 67.

[20] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, [1953] 2001), 66.

sensory experience of himself."[21] This does not show, however, that emotions are not perceptions; what it shows, rather, is that they are not *sense* perceptions.

It is worth noting here that even defenders of the view that emotions are essentially judgments often resort to perception language to explain the way that emotions involve construals of their objects. Consider, for example, Nussbaum's claim that "Emotions are not about their objects merely in the sense of being pointed at them and let go, the way an arrow is released toward its target. Their aboutness is more internal, and embodies a way of seeing."[22] Indeed, to experience gratitude is to construe someone as having bestowed some underserved benefit upon one. Likewise, to be afraid is to construe something in one's environment as a threat to one's safety or to the safety of something (or someone) about which (whom) one cares.

I shall not here attempt to recapitulate Roberts' seminal discussion of the construals constitutive of emotional experience. I shall, however, consider and object to Roberts' claim that the construals involved in emotion are not essentially propositional.[23] On the basis of apparent counterexamples to propositional accounts of emotional perception, Roberts contends that "One of the strengths of the construal account is that it

[21] Roberts, *Emotions*, 67.

[22] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 27.

[23] It is worth noting that Roberts does not take this as evidence against the perceptual thesis of emotion, but rather as evidence for the perceptual thesis, since Roberts rejects the view that all sense perceptions have propositional content: "My basic paradigm is that emotions are a kind of perception, and perceptions in the relevant sense may, but need not, be propositional" (*Emotions*, 132).

makes neither judgments nor propositions essential to emotions, though propositions structure most post-infantile human emotions."[24]

Roberts considers two primary types of emotions that seem not to have propositional content: the emotions of non-human animals and what Roberts calls "the musical emotions," i.e., emotional responses to music *as* music.[25] I will consider each in order.

Concerning the possibility of propositional non-human animal perception, Bengson, Grube, and Korman observe, "it is hardly obvious that such creatures cannot meet the comparatively undemanding conditions for possessing the demonstrative concepts that (by conceptualist lights) would enable them to have [perceptual] experiences."[26] Indeed, if Roberts is willing to allow that non-human animals have perceptual construals, it does not seem that he has reason to stop short of the claim that such creatures have perceptual experiences complete with conceptual and, thus, propositional content. For, as Roberts explains, construals "involve an 'in terms of' relationship: one thing is perceived in terms of something else."[27] Presumably, in order for a non-human animal to construe one thing in terms of another, it must at the very least have some concept of that in terms of which it is construing the perceptual object, even if a low-level, unsophisticated, demonstrative concept, such as *that kind of thing*.

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[24] Roberts, *Emotions*, 115.

[25] Roberts, *Emotions*, 115-132.

[26] Bengson, et. al., "A New Framework for Conceptualism."

[27] Roberts, *Emotions*, 76.

I have recently been watching a television show that documents the lives of big cats in the Masai Mara region of Kenya. In one episode, as a cheetah was being chased by an angry mother topi whose fawn the cheetah had attempted to kill, the cheetah leapt onto the hood and then the roof of the camera crew's jeep, narrowly escaping the charging topi. The documenters explained that the cats they documented generally treated their jeeps with some wariness, this was especially true of very young cats encountering the jeeps for the first time, but that this particular cheetah, Kike ("kee-kay"), had spent six years of her life around the jeeps and had apparently come to see them as a non-threatening and even potentially useful feature of her environment. Kike needed no concept *jeep*, or *vehicle*, to construe *that thing* as non-threatening. Perhaps she needed some concept of what it is to be a threat or a non-threat, but it is not obvious why we should think she lacks such a concept. In fact, the ability many non-human animals possess to construe a thing in terms of its being a threat, as revealed by their behavior, seems good evidence that they do have such a concept. Neither animals' lack of language, nor their inability to reflect on their concepts, if indeed they lack this second-order conceptual ability, suggests that they lack the first-order ability to form and employ concepts in perception.

The employment of very simple concepts in perception is not, after all, a very high-level cognitive achievement. As Roberts explains, the act of perceptually construing one thing in terms of some concept often involves no explicit thought at all, leading Roberts to the conclusion that "construals are often unconscious."[28] He provides the following example:

[28] Roberts, *Emotions*, 72.

> I am reading a journal article in which a quotation appears at the end of one page and extends by three words onto the next. I turn the page and can't find the end of the quotation. I turn back again to see whether the quotation has in fact ended on the preceding page. No. On further examination of the succeeding page I see the three words hanging there isolated at the top, and realize that I have been construing them as a header, with the result that I did not consciously see them at all.[29]

It does not seem quite right to say, with Roberts, that the reader did not consciously see the end of the quotation. At least, this does not seem the only plausible interpretation of the event. He might not have read or focused on the words, but if he construed the words as a header at all, surely he must have at least momentarily seen (i.e., really perceived) the markings on the page, even if only instantaneously and in his peripheral vision. He merely paid them no attention, given his habit of ignoring headers as he reads. Of course, it is possible that he failed to see the words at all, merely having had an unnoticed visual sensation of the words, or, if his peripheral eyesight is particularly bad, perhaps not having had any sensation at all. Yet, if this were the case, it would seem strange to say that he construed the words as a header. In the absence of a noticed sensation, it is hard to imagine to what construal might amount. This does not, however, entail that all construals, as opposed to the objects of construals, are themselves noticed or attended to.

Here, I think, is the truth behind Roberts' claim that construals are often unconscious; namely, construals often go unnoticed. We are often unaware of our own construals. One can be consciously aware of some object in one's perceptual field and even construe it in some term(s), however, without being aware that one is construing it

[29] Roberts, *Emotions*, 72.

at all. Reid makes precisely this point with respect to all of the operations of the human mind, including emotions:

> although the mind is conscious of its operations, it does not attend to them; its attention is turned solely to the external objects, about which those operations are employed. Thus, when a man is angry, he is conscious of his passion; but his attention is turned to the person who offended him, and the circumstances of the offence, while the passion of anger is not in the least the object of his attention.[30]

What this Reidian insight reveals about animal perception is that no higher-order awareness or linguistic thought about one's perceptual construals is necessary for perception. No more cognitive work seems necessary for animal perception than was employed by the reader who construed, unawares, the hanging words at the top of the page as a header and, hence, as something to be ignored. The animal must simply be able to see *that thing* (say, e.g., a particular jeep) *as* being *such a kind of thing*, where the terms of the construal need involve very little descriptive content and need not be expressed in linguistic thought.

Moreover, if we adopt a Reidian "dual-component theory" of perception, such as that defended by Bengson, Grube, and Korman, it is plausible to conclude that all of the full-fledged perceptual experiences of animals contain propositional content, even though their mere sensory experiences do not have conceptual content. It may, in fact, be that much animal behavior, especially among animals less cognitively developed than dogs, cheetahs, gorillas, and dolphins, for instance, can be explained in terms of immediate, instinctual reactions to mere sensations, as opposed to willed actions in response to perceptions. In any case, insofar as one is willing to allow that non-human animals

[30] Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Baruch Brody, ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, [1785] 1969), 57.

perceive, one also ought to allow that their perceptions involve concepts, however primitive, non-linguistic, and unsophisticated they may be.

Once it is seen that animal perceptions often involve such primitive propositional content, there is no longer any reason to think that animal emotions do not involve similar propositional content. In fact, the example of Kike the cheetah suggests not only that Kike perceived the camera crew's jeep as a familiar and non-threatening object, but also that she perceived the charging topi as a dangerous threat to her safety. No more than these concepts seems necessary for Kike to have experienced several propositional emotions during this event, including fear, hope, and relief.[31] It is, in fact, largely on account of considerations of the propositional content of animal emotions such as those I have offered here that Roberts, in his most recent writings, has defended a view that appears much closer to a full-fledged propositional account.[32]

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[31] Reid notes that some non-human animals exhibit at least this level of conceptual understanding: "A dog or a horse understands, by nature, when the human voice caresses, and when it threatens" (*An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, Derek R. Brookes, ed. [University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press (1764) 1997], 51 [IV ii]).

[32] See Roberts, "The Sophistication of Non-Human Emotions," in Robert W. Lurz, *The Philosophy of Animal Minds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 218-36; and Roberts, "Emotions and the Canons of Evaluation," in Peter Goldie, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 561-83. I hesitate to say that Roberts' view is a full-fledged propositional account because he never explicitly defends the view that all emotions have propositional content. The closest thing to such a claim in his work is his contention that "the vast majority of emotions are propositional" in the sense that "they are susceptible of reasonably accurate propositional characterizations" ("Emotions and the Canons of Evaluation," 573). It may be that he thinks all other emotions are propositional in one of the other senses he analyzes, but he nowhere commits himself to this stronger claim in his writing. Despite whatever ambivalence might be present in his writing, however, Roberts has assured me in conversation that he means to defend a full-fledged propositional account.

Let us now consider Roberts' other proposed counterexample to propositional accounts of emotions; namely, the musical emotions. Roberts argues that certain emotional experiences caused by listening to music do not have propositional content. Roberts is careful to distinguish standard emotions about situations involving music (e.g., a father becoming angry about the loud music blaring from his daughter's room) and standard emotions that are merely brought about or enhanced by the association of music with some situational object (e.g., the way hearing patriotic music can elicit feelings of pride for one's country) from emotions elicited by music *as* music (e.g., the delight he feels in response to the C Minor Fugue in J.S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*).[33] Focusing on the latter, he cites two primary ways in which such emotions differ from standard propositional emotions.[34] First, whereas propositions about the situational objects of standard emotions convey to us the emotional state of the subject, no such propositional account of the object of musical emotion (i.e., the music itself) conveys to us the emotional state of the subject. Second, propositions about the situational objects of the standard emotions tend to evoke the same emotions in listeners who share the perspective of the speaker, while no such effect is caused by propositions about the objects of the musical emotions.

Roberts thus ties the propositional content (or structure) of the standard emotions to our ability to communicate and evoke emotional states through linguistically expressed propositions. It does not seem, however, that the propositional content of emotions must be communicable in the way Roberts describes or the emotions evocable through

[33] Roberts, *Emotions*, 119-22.

[34] Roberts, *Emotions*, 128.

propositional language use for them to have propositional content. Moreover, there is a more plausible explanation for each of the facts Roberts considers than that the musical emotions do not contain propositions. To see this, consider the following example. Jake has never heard of the game of baseball and does not know any of its rules. Jake does, however, understand the game of American football quite well. John, who is a friend of Jake's but is unaware of Jake's ignorance of baseball, has just watched a baseball game and explains to Jake in an indignant voice that, "The pitcher threw a good inside pitch and then the batter charged the mound and tackled the pitcher." While this is quite a precise propositional account of the object of John's indignation, it does not seem that it has the power to communicate John's emotional state to Jake, at least not without the help of the indignant intonation of John's voice and his correspondingly indignant facial expressions. Given Jake's familiarity with football, once he realizes that baseball is also a sport he might very well expect that tackling the pitcher is precisely what one ought to do in the described situation and so interpret John's emotion (again, absent any other linguistic or facial cues) as admiration for the batter.

What this example reveals is that one's ability to communicate one's emotional state to others through propositions about the situational object of one's emotion is dependent, not on whether the emotion has propositional content, but on whether and to what degree one's interlocutor understands the object of the emotion in question. So, the fact that we are unable to communicate our emotional states in response to music simply by describing the music can be explained as plausibly by our society's general lack of understanding of music as by the lack of propositional content of musical emotions. Likewise, the fact that we are typically unable to evoke the so-called musical emotions

through propositions about their musical objects, no more reveals that the musical emotions lack propositional content than the fact that I cannot evoke horror by describing a distant horrific natural disaster to someone with a lack of imagination for the horrific reveals that my horror lacks propositional content.

In light of these considerations, it does not seem that the best explanation for the two facts about the musical emotions Roberts cites is that such emotions lack propositional content. However, Roberts further ties the propositional content of the standard emotions to common linguistic practice: "That musical emotions are not structured by propositions is also indicated by the way we speak of them. We say, 'I was delighted by the music' but not, 'I was delighted *about* the music.'"[35] This argument, like the argument from the best explanation just considered, also fails to show that the musical emotions lack propositional content. Consider that I might very naturally say, "I was delighted by my son's performance in his play," and then, when asked what my delight was about, answer (with some puzzlement) "My son's performance, of course." When I say I am delighted by my son's performance, I am merely emphasizing the causal relationship between my son's performance and my emotional states, as opposed to the intentional relationship between my emotion and his performance. When I say that I am delighted by a piece of music, or a theme of a piece of music, I indicate the cause of my delight. If my delight is not also *in* or *about* the music, however, it is hard to see why we should consider the music the object of my emotion, as Roberts consistently does. Perhaps what we often take to be musical emotions have no object at all. In this case, however, it is hard to see why we should consider them full-fledged emotions and not

[35] Roberts, *Emotions*, 128.

mere objectless feelings that, nevertheless, are phenomenally similar to, though I suspect distinguishable from, emotions in some significant ways.

I conclude that emotions, like sense perceptions, essentially involve construals with propositional content. Of course, as I explained above, one need not hold a propositional account of sense perception or a propositional account of emotion in order to maintain the perceptual thesis of emotions. If a proponent of the perceptual thesis rejects one of the accounts, however, she must, on pain of inconsistency, go with Roberts and reject them both.

1.4 Accuracy

Another significant parallel between emotion and sense perception is that both kinds of mental states are subject to accuracy or truth conditions. Just as sense perceptions can be more or less accurate in the ways that they present the world to their subjects (i.e., their propositional content can be closer to or further from being true), so too emotions can be more or less accurate in the way that they present the world to their subjects. This feature of emotions is often discussed in terms of the fittingness of emotions, though some emotion theorists have recently recommended reframing the discussion in terms of the truth or falsity of emotions.[36] Whatever terms are used, it seems clear that emotions can get their objects right and they can also get them wrong.

[36] See, e.g., de Sousa "Emotional Truth," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supp. Vol. 76 (2002): 247-63; de Sousa, "What I Know, What I'd Like to Think I Know, and What I'd Like to Think," in Robert C. Solomon, ed., *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 61-75; and Mikko Salmela, "True Emotions," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 56 (2006): 382-405.

On the Robertsian construal analysis of emotions I have thus far been proposing emotions can be misconstruals of their objects. So, in anger, one might misconstrue an unintentional oversight as an intentional slight. Likewise, in grief, one might misconstrue the object lost, by seeing it as more valuable than it really is. Here, it is important to note that emotional perception is in many cases dependent to a certain degree on sense perception, as well as other sources of ordinary information. Sometimes we experience a wrong or unfitting emotion, not because our emotion misfires, but because we fail to perceive the situation accurately with our sense faculties. Once, in the middle of a sermon, I heard a pastor admonishingly refer to the congregation as "stiff-necked people." Although it was quite unintentional, the pastor's Southern drawl together with his bisyllabic pronunciation of "necked" caused many in the congregation to hear him describe them as "stiff, naked people." Some evidently were embarrassed by this, others apparently offended. Their emotions of embarrassment and offense, however, were misguided by their (auditory) misperception of the pastor's words. Here, the inaccuracy of their emotional perceptions was not primarily inaccuracy with respect to the situation as sensorily perceived (though one might think offense, even if not embarrassment, an inaccurate emotional perception of the admonition even as it was misheard), but rather inaccuracy with respect to the words the pastor actually spoke (or, at least, intended to speak). Contrast the emotional responses of embarrassment and offense, with the seemingly more fitting humor that many in the congregation experienced in response to the incongruity between the pastor's words as they sounded, albeit unintentionally, and the context of a Sunday morning family church service.

It might be thought that the dependence of emotion on sense perception reveals that emotions are, after all, non-perceptual. However, the fact that emotions sometimes depend for their accuracy on sense perceptual abilities does not distinguish emotions from sense perceptions at all. In defense of moral perception, which seems to depend on sense perceptual abilities in the way emotional perception does, Michael Watkins and Kelly Dean Jolley have convincingly argued that many, and perhaps most, of our sense perceptual abilities are "acquired skills" that are "parasitic on native perceptual abilities."[37] The ability of sommeliers to smell and taste the notes of berry and chocolate in a wine and the ability of an oncologist to identify – literally, *to see* – cancer cells under a microscope, for instance, are acquired perceptual skills that nevertheless depend on native perceptual abilities, such as the primitive, untrained abilities to see and taste anything at all. Hence, the fact that emotional construals are often parasitic on sense perceptual abilities, no more shows that emotions are not perceptual than it shows that the sommelier's and oncologist's expert perceptions are non-perceptual.

Moreover, emotions are neither essentially, nor always dependent on sense perception. As I intimated in discussion of the intentionality of emotions, the objects of emotional perception need not be objects of sense perception at all. Emotions can and often do take imagined situations as their objects. As Roberts explains, "emotions can occur in the absence of literal sensory content. I can get angry just thinking about so-and-so."[38] Even when the object of an emotion is an imagined (or otherwise non-sensory) scenario, however, the emotion is still subject to accuracy or truth conditions.

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[37] Michael Watkins and Kelly Dean Jolley, "Pollyanna Realism: Moral Perception and Moral Properties," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 80, no. 1 (2002): 77.

[38] Roberts, *Emotions*, 88.

Through one's emotions, one can construe the merely conceived situation accurately or inaccurately. One might, for example, conceive of the prospect of meeting one's in-laws for the first time and experience a great deal of fear toward the prospect, when in fact one has very good evidence that the meeting poses no danger to one.

1.5 Original and Acquired Perception

Watkins and Jolley's distinction between native and acquired perceptual skills, like Bengson, Grube, and Korman's sensory awareness/perceptual experience distinction, was anticipated by Reid's seminal work on perception. Reid famously distinguished original from acquired perceptions. According to Reid, "Our perceptions are of two kinds: some are natural and original, others acquired, and the fruit of experience."[39] To understand Reid's distinction, one must first understand Reid's concept of "natural signs" and the role they play in perception.

Reid argued that all perception involves conception of and belief in a material object caused by a sensation. For Reid, the causal relationship between sensation and conception-plus-belief (i.e., perception) is that between sign and thing signified. Reid noticed that humans are naturally so constituted as to move from sensory consciousness of some signs to conception and belief of that which they signify without any prior experience or training, i.e., by "original principles of our constitution." We are simply "hardwired," for example, to perceive the hardness and softness of bodies through the sensation of touch.[40] Perceptions involving this type of mental movement from sign to thing signified Reid called original perception.

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[39] *Inq.* VI xx, 171.

[40] *Inq*. VI xxi, 178.

By contrast, most of the signification relationships we employ in perception are learned, even if very early on, through experience. So, for example, while we originally perceive only two-dimensionality through vision, we learn, by associating of visual signs such as shades of color, shadows, and visible figure, with tactile sensations of three-dimensional objects, to perceive the three-dimensionality of objects through sight.[41] Such associations, though acquired through experience and initially based on inferences, can become immediate and non-inferential. When they do, they are, in Reid's terminology, acquired perceptions. As Reid explains by way of analogy with mathematical thought, it is sometimes difficult to tell acquired perception from very quick inferences:

> When a long train of reasoning is necessary in demonstrating a mathematical proposition, it is easily distinguished from an axiom, and they seem to be things of a very different nature. But there are some propositions which lie so near to axioms, that it is difficult to say, whether they ought to be held as axioms, or demonstrated as propositions. The same thing holds with regard to perception, and the conclusions drawn from it. Some of these conclusions follow our perceptions so easily, and are so immediately connected with them, that it is difficult to fix the limit which divides the one from the other.[42]

Reid emphasizes, however, that the distinguishing feature of perception is the absence of the exercise of reason or inference: "Perception, whether original or acquired, implies no exercise of reason."[43] The expert perceptions of the sommelier and the oncologist discussed above are examples of acquired perception, being as they are natural, non-inferential movements from the gustatory and olfactory sensations of the wine and the visual sensations of the magnified cells, respectively, to conceptually rich

[41] *Inq*. VI xx, 171.

[42] *Inq*. VI xx, 172-3.

[43] *Inq*. VI xx, 173.

perceptions of the wine and the cells. Compare Reid's examples of the shepherd's ability to distinguish each sheep in his flock from the others, the butcher's ability to know by sight the weight of cows and sheep, the farmer's ability to perceive the approximate number of ears of corn in a pile by its size, and the sailor's ability to perceive visually the build and distance of a ship even while it is a long way off.[44] In his book, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, Malcom Gladwell considers several modern-day accounts of such occupationally specific abilities. While at least some of Gladwell's accounts seem to involve acquired perception, his accounts reveal just how thin the line is between acquired perception and quick inference, or, what Gladwell calls "rapid cognition."[45]

It is important to note that in none of the aforementioned cases of acquired perceptual ability does the subject's perception project the properties perceived onto the perceptual objects in the sense that it creates the properties. As Watkins and Jolley put it, "Acquired perceptual skills provide information that unskilled perception cannot provide; but not because the skill adds something to what is seen. Correct exercises of the skill are revelatory, not creative."[46] Acquired perceptions are, nevertheless, "perceptual skills augmented by the intellect" in the sense that they rely on prior development of sometimes quite complex conceptual frameworks.[47] Yet, as Watkins and Jolley are careful to emphasize in keeping with their realist account of moral perception, acquired perception

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[44] *Inq*. VI xx, 172.

[45] Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2005).

[46] Watkins and Jolley, "Pollyanna Realism," 77.

[47] Watkins and Jolley, "Pollyanna Realism," 77.

is not the projection of properties onto the world by the intellect, but rather the reception of information through perceptual engagement with the world made possible by the development (and subsequent perceptual employment) of non-native concepts: "Intellectual abilities do *not* augment perceptual ones by *informing perceptions*; instead, they augment perceptual abilities by *making perceptions (more) informative*."[48]

Unlike acquired perceptions, the concepts employed in which are sometimes the products of convention, the concepts at work in original perception originate in the original perceptual experience itself. Consider, for example, original tactile perception of the hardness of an object. When we touch a hard object, we immediately form the conception of hardness and employ it in perception of the object as hard, even though, as Reid famously argues, the sensation involved in touching a hard object bears no resemblance to our concept of hardness.[49]

But how can we both gain and employ a concept in perception if perception is essentially conceptual? Bengson, Grube, and Korman argue that it is the sensation component of perception, rather than the propositional experience component, that makes concepts for sensible properties available to the subject, but they offer no explanation as

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[48] Watkins and Jolley, "Pollyanna Realism," 75. Talbot Brewer emphasizes that such experiences are, in fact, perceptual and non-inferential: "It is a perfectly general truth that our immediate apprehension of the world is structured by the concepts we have mastered, and it continues to take on a more refined structure as we master a more complex and ample array of concepts. The untrained eye looking at neurons through an electron microscope will see undifferentiated blobs with no more intelligible form than splattered paint. A trained neurologist will see synapses, axons, dendrites, and growth cones. This conceptual structuring does not seem to emerge as the product of judgments to the effect that certain blotches of color are synapses, axons, dendrites, or growth cones—they are simply seen as such" (*The Retrieval of Ethics* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 31).

[49] See Reid's *experimentum crucis* against the Theory of Ideas – *Inq*. V vii, 70.

to how sensation might do so.[50] Reid explains quite simply that the sensations involved in original perception occasion in us (perceptual) conception and belief of that which they signify by "some natural kind of magic."[51] Acquired perception involves no such magical concept formation intrinsic to the perceptual experience itself. When we see the hard object as hard, we employ a concept originating in (original) tactile perception that we have come, through custom, to associate with visual features that we, in acquired perception, now treat as signs of hardness. Still others of the concepts we employ in acquired perception, such as the oncologist's concept of cancer cells, originate in conventional practices of scientific research and communal dialogue aimed at organizing the complexities of our world into manageable conceptual space.

While the original/acquired distinction is a contingent feature of human sense perception in the sense that all perception could have been original, it is nevertheless significant that emotions are distinguishable along the same lines. Like their sensory counterparts, some emotional perceptions are original, while others are acquired. While it is difficult to say precisely which emotions are original perceptions of the emotion-relevant properties of their objects, it is plausible that without the aid of original emotional perception we would not possess many of our evaluative concepts.[52] Consider,

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[50] Bengson, et. al., "A New Framework for Conceptualism."

[51] *Inq*. V iii, 60.

[52] Perhaps the most promising candidates for original emotional perception are what are commonly referred to in the literature as the "basic emotions," typically thought to include fear, anger, disgust, sadness, joy and surprise – I have this list from Paul Griffiths, "Basic Emotions, Complex Emotions, Machiavellian Emotions," in Anthony Hatzimoysis, ed., *Philosophy and the Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 42.

for example, the following story of the autistic animal scientist, Temple Grandin, recounted by Oilver Sacks:

> As we drove into the park, the landscape opened out into an immense mountain plateau, with limitless views in every direction. We pulled off the road and gazed toward the Rockies—snowcapped, outlined against the horizon, luminously clear even though they were nearly a hundred miles away. I asked Temple if she did not feel a sense of their sublimity. 'They're pretty, yes. Sublime, I don't know.' When I pressed her, she said that she was puzzled by such words and had spent much time with a dictionary, trying to understand them. She had looked up 'sublime,' 'mysterious,' 'numinous,' and 'awe,' but they all seemed to be defined in terms of one another. 'The mountains are pretty,' she repeated, 'but they don't give me a special feeling, the feeling you seem to enjoy.' After living for three and a half years in Fort Collins, she said, this was only the second time she had been to them.[53]

As Sacks explains, Grandin exhibits a "poverty of emotional or aesthetic response to most visual scenes: she can describe them with great accuracy but they do not seem to correspond to or evoke any strongly felt states of mind."[54] Grandin's emotional deficiency seems, by her own account, to have resulted in a conceptual deficiency. Not having ever directly perceived the sublimity of anything through the emotion of awe, or some related emotion, Grandin lacks the concept of sublimity; or, if you prefer, she lacks *our* concept of sublimity. That is, even if Grandin has, with the help of the dictionary and conversational testimony, formed a concept of sublimity that refers to the same property as our emotion-generated concept, what we might call the descriptive content of her concept is quite different from and inferior to that of our concept due to the fact that hers is not informed by any direct experiential acquaintance with the property of sublimity.[55]

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[53] Oliver Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 293.

[54] Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars*, 286.

[55] I have the referential content/descriptive content distinction from Todd Buras, "Three Grades of Immediate Perception: Thomas Reid's Distinctions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 76, no. 3 (2008): 603-32; Cf. Van Cleve's presentation of a

Much like tactile perception of hardness, normal emotional perception of the sublimity of such majestic objects as the Rockies is an unlearned, natural response seemingly caused by what Reid would call an original principle of our constitution. In fact, Reid himself, though he nowhere explicitly defends and even sometimes seems to reject a perceptual account of emotions,[56] suggests that some emotional responses are akin to original sense perceptions in the sense that they are unlearned, natural responses to their objects:

> The passion of love, with all its concomitant sentiments and desires, is naturally suggested by the perception of beauty in the other sex. Yet the same perception does not suggest the tender passion, till a certain period of life. A blow given to an infant, raises grief and lamentation; but when he grows up, it as naturally stirs resentment, and prompts him to resistance.[57]

Reid emphasizes by way of analogy with emotion that while the concepts formed and employed in original sense perception (and analogous emotional experiences) are innate in the sense that they are not abstracted from the sensations that give rise to them, they are not innate in the sense that we already possess them prior to experience – we do not; nor does one and the same sensation/situation generate the same original perception in all subjects or at every stage of development. (This possibility of emotional conceptual development will be important to remember as we discuss the relationship of emotion to epistemic goods in the following chapters.)

Reidian account of perceptual conception according to which such conception involves direct acquaintance ("Reids Theory of Perception," 106-8). See also my comparison of Reidian conception with the notion of construal introduced above (Adam C. Pelser, "Belief in Reid's Theory of Perception," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 27, no. 4 [2010]: 359-78).

[56] See Terrence Cuneo, "Signs of Value: Reid on the Evidential Role of Feelings in Moral Judgment," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 69-91.

[57] *Inq*. V vii, 72.

Like sense perception, emotional perceptual abilities can also be acquired. Just as we learn to treat two-dimensional visual presentations of material objects as signs of three-dimensionality by associating visual with tactile sensations, we also learn to associate certain emotion-relevant properties of situations with others such that the appearance of the one comes to serve as a sign of the other. Consider, for example, the way that one might, through a process of moral education, learn to treat situations initially (and, perhaps, originally in the Reidian sense) inspiring remorse as signs of one's own moral guilt and, hence, come to see them through the eyes of the emotion of guilt. Roberts notes that "Guilt…differs from remorse in focusing less or not at all on a particular offense and more on the offender's status of being guilty….Remorse turns easily into guilt as the subject generalizes from his being an offender in some particular to his being morally spoiled."[58] It is not difficult to imagine this generalization from awareness of one's culpability for particular offenses to awareness of one's own moral guilt becoming an immediate, non-inferential, acquired perception. It seems then that, like sense perceptions, some emotional experiences are original perceptions of emotion-relevant properties while others are acquired perceptions of those properties.

1.6 Belief

In addition to functioning as sources of concepts, sense perception and emotion are also both sources of beliefs. When I look outside and perceive a tree, I naturally, immediately, and seemingly irresistibly form a belief in the propositional content of my perception, which includes information about the tree's existence and some of its visible features. The same goes for paradigmatic emotional experience. As Roberts explains,

[58] Roberts, *Emotions*, 223.

"In typical cases of emotions in rational persons…the subject of an emotion believes most of its propositional content. A rational gardener anxious about her tomato plants because hail is predicted will typically judge her plants to be in some danger from hail."[59]

The naturalness, immediacy, and seeming irresistibility of the belief-formation that accompanies sense perception have led some notable perception theorists to conclude that judgment or belief is an essential component of sense perception.[60] Reid, an important figure in this tradition, writes, "We have shown…that every operation of the senses, in its very nature, implies judgment or belief, as well as simple apprehension….When I perceive a tree before me, my faculty of seeing gives me not only a notion or simple apprehension of the tree, but a belief of its existence, and of its figure, distance, and magnitude; and this judgment or belief is not got by comparing ideas, it is included in the very nature of perception."[61] Likewise, the naturalness, immediacy, and seeming irresistibility of the process of belief-formation that accompanies emotional experience have led some prominent emotion theorists to conclude that beliefs or judgments are essential to emotions.[62] In fact, the standard view that emotions are opposed to rationality is typically motivated by the observation that we so regularly form beliefs on the basis of unreliable emotional experiences that we have obvious reasons to distrust (not the least of which is our awareness of their unreliability).[63]

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[59] Roberts, *Emotions*, 82.

[60] See, e.g., Armstrong, *Perception and the Physical World*, and Heil, "Seeing is Believing."

[61] *Inq*. VII, 215.

[62] See, e.g., Solomon, *A Passion for Justice*, and Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*.

[63] I address the issue of the unreliability of emotions at length in chapter two.

While it is true that sense perception and emotion both have a tendency to generate beliefs, there are good reasons to think that neither involves belief as an essential component, product or concomitant. Roberts notes in this regard that while emotions as construals (appearances, *phantasiai*) present some proposition to their subjects as true and, in that sense, embody a kind of judgment, "The subject's judgment often coincides with the emotion's 'judgment,' but often it does not. In this way our emotions are like other perceptions: Usually we believe our eyes and ears, but not always."[64] In the case of emotions, consider the "knowing phobic" who justifiedly believes that the garter snake at his feet is not very dangerous, but nevertheless recoils in fear at its presence. Though in his intense fear the snake appears to him to be quite dangerous, he resists the impulse to believe it is so. In some cases, the knowing phobic might even become so adept at resisting the impulse to believe the propositional content of his emotions that his emotions no longer generate even an impulse to judge that the world is as they present it.[65] Talbot Brewer argues with respect to such cases that "people often experience emotions that they judge to be ill-grounded, and the principle of charity of interpretation counts against attributing contradictory beliefs to people whenever they find themselves in this predicament—provided, at least that there is a viable alternative."[66] Understanding emotions as perceptual construals and not beliefs or judgments is not only a viable, but a plausible alternative.

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[64] Roberts, *Emotions*, 89.

[65] For a much more developed and compelling case against judgment theories of emotions, see Roberts, *Emotions*, 83-106.

[66] Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, 130. Brewer takes this to be an objection to "straightforward cognitivism about emotions," but since a construal (non-judgment)

There are analogous cases that show that belief is neither an essential ingredient, nor an essential concomitant of sense perception. Consider, for example, the following case.[67] After several days traveling in the desert, a veteran desert traveler seems to see an oasis not too far off in a region she believes to have no oases. Despite the astounding clarity of her visual sensation, including such details as green plants, small trees, and a small pool of still water, our traveler, knowing the likelihood of hallucination in such environments to be high and believing this region of desert to be barren, does not believe in the existence of the oasis. Unbeknownst to the traveler, however, this oasis is real. Perhaps it sprang up by some uncommon natural process in the time since the traveler's last journey through this patch of desert, or perhaps it is a man-made oasis fed by well water—the work of a committee of green-thumbed nomads for desert beautification. Whatever the explanation for our traveler's lack of belief in the existence of the oasis, this seems at least a *prima facie* plausible case of perception without belief. It seems a strained account of the situation, to say the least, to claim that the traveler does not perceive the oasis on the grounds that she does not believe it to exist or to be the cause of her sensation.

I have argued elsewhere that cases such as the oasis case reveal that Reid and those who follow in his tradition are wrong to treat belief as essential to perception.[68] I

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account of emotions might reasonably be classified as a cognitivist account, it is best to understand this as an objection only to judgment or belief theories of emotions.

[67] A.D. Smith presents a brief version of this case and points out that versions of this case have become common fixtures in the recent literature on perception ("Perception and Belief," "Perception and Belief," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62, no. 2 [March, 2001], 287). I develop this case further and defend it against several objections in my "Belief in Reid's Theory of Perception."

[68] Pelser, "Belief in Reid's Theory of Perception."

propose, instead, a construal analysis of perception according to which perceptions are essentially construals, as described above, which tend to produce beliefs in their propositional contents, but do not always do so. On such an analysis, and according to the analyses of emotion and sense perception defended in this chapter, both emotion and sense perception are properly considered kinds of perceptual states. Of course, as I explained above, one need not accept this particular feature of my perceptual account of emotions in order to accept the perceptual thesis of emotion I defend throughout this dissertation, but I take it that the construal/perceptual account of emotions I have defended here lends plausibility to the perceptual thesis. In the chapters to follow I will consider additional support for the perceptual thesis grounded in the epistemic functions emotions share with sense perceptions. Before proceeding, however, I must first consider the relationship between emotions and desires or concerns, as it accounts for the most significant dissimilarities between emotion and sense perception and makes emotion the special kind of perception it is.

2. Desires, Concerns, and Perceptions of Value

Perhaps the most significant difference between emotion and sense perception is that our ability to experience the former, but not the latter, depends on our possession of concerns. When I gaze out my window at a tree, I see a tree whether or not I have any concerns regarding the tree. Not so with emotions. To experience an emotion in response to some (situated) object, one must have concern(s) relevant to some feature of the object. To experience fear, I must not only construe a situational object as involving a danger to myself or something/someone else; I must also be concerned for my safety or for the well-being of the endangered object. To experience sorrow, I must not only

construe a situation as involving some loss; I must also have some concern about or attachment to the object lost. Here again I follow Roberts. According to Roberts' *concern-based construals* analysis emotions are essentially grounded or based in concerns. Roberts explains that the reason two people can experience the same situation and believe all the same things about it, while having different emotional responses to it, lies in their relevant concerns.

Roberts explains further that it is not enough for genuine emotion that one simply have a concern relevant to the perceived (or construed) situation, but also that one's concern must be "taken up" in the construal as a term of the construal itself.[69] He distinguishes the concerns basic to emotions (i.e., those concerns in which the emotions are based) from the concerns that arise out of or are consequent to emotions (e.g., the desire to harm those with whom one is angry). He explains by analogy with sense perceptual construals how a concern basic to an emotion can function as a kind of cause of the emotion, while also being "taken up" into the emotion as a constitutive term. He considers the familiar old woman/young woman gestalt figure and explains that were one to reproduce the figure without the blotch that represents the nose of the young woman, it would become difficult to construe the figure as a young woman, though one might, upon the blotch's being digitally reinserted, immediately construe the figure as a young woman. In such a case, the blotch would be both an outside (or, in Roberts' terminology, an "exogenous") cause of the construal as well as a term or constituent "taken up" into the construal itself.[70]

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[69] Roberts, *Emotions*, 145-8.

[70] Roberts, *Emotions*, 145.

As a way of illustrating this notion of concerns being "taken up" in emotional experience, Roberts considers Allan Gibbard's puzzlement that:

> what shames one person leaves another untouched. One person might be ashamed of his shabby clothes, while for me, say, shabby clothes matter not at all. Must we have different beliefs about clothes?...Each of us might well know his clothes are shabby, and each of us might have like beliefs about what sorts of people have shabby clothes and who will disdain us for it and who will not. Our difference seems to be just that he finds shabby clothes shameful and I do not – and it is not clear what that amounts to apart from the fact that he feels ashamed of it and I do not.[71]

Roberts responds that:

> The difference between them is that in the one person a concern to make a good impression, corresponding to the evaluative belief [i.e., that it is important to make a good impression on social equals by way of one's clothes], is taken up in his construal of his clothes and social situation, thus making his experience of the situation quite different from that of someone who lacks that concern, or in whose construal that concern is not taken up.[72]

As this example illustrates, the objects of emotional experience are, as a result of the concern-based nature of emotions, seen essentially in terms of their value (or disvalue). In other words, emotions are essentially evaluative perceptions. Whereas sense perception involves construal of objects in terms of their visible, audible, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory properties, emotional perception involves construal of objects in terms of their value or disvalue, be it moral, aesthetic, etc. Anger, for example, involves the construal of a situational object as involving a wrong done against the subject or the subject's own, with an emphasis on the offensiveness of the wrong done. Anger is an evaluative construal in the sense that the wrong done is construed in terms of its negative bearing on the subject's concern that he and his own not be the victims of wrongdoing.

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[71] Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 137; quoted in Roberts, *Emotions*, 141.

[72] Roberts, *Emotions*, 141.

Likewise, joy is an evaluative construal in the sense that the object of joy is construed in terms of its positive bearing on some concern(s) of the subject.

One final point Roberts makes that will be relevant for our purposes here is that the concerns involved in emotions are often desires, but that sometimes they do not embody the same kind of commitment to a goal characteristic of desires. He notes that "many emotions are based, not on goal commitments, but on personal attachments or carings."[73]

It might be thought that the intimate relationship between emotions and concerns, including desires, attachments, cares, etc., reveals that emotions are not perceptions after all. Aren't concerns inherently subjective? How could a state that has subjectivity built into its very structure the way emotions seem to have, be a species of the same genus as sense perception? In reply to this worry we must first get clear on the nature of the subjectivity inherent in emotional experience. Ronald de Sousa considers four ways in which emotions might be thought to be subjective – in terms of phenomenology, projection, relativity, and perspective – and argues that none of these undermines the analogy of emotion with sense perception.[74] The only kind of subjectivity de Sousa considers that is not exhibited by sense perception is projection; that is, sense perceptions are not mere projections of non-existent properties onto the world based on our concerns or desires that those properties be instantiated in the world. Neither, however, is emotion subjective in this sense, as evidenced by the fact that emotions are subject to accuracy conditions (recall our discussion above). As de Sousa puts the point, albeit a bit

[73] Roberts, *Emotions*, 143.

[74] de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*, 141-58.

obscurely, "Emotions, like [sense] perceptions, can have illusory focus or hallucinatory targets. But not all focal properties are projections; and the possibility of marking the distinction is all that is required by the analogy of perception."[75]

The relationship between emotions and the concerns in which they are based raises another worry for the perceptual thesis that might also be understood in terms of the subjectivity of emotion. That is, given that emotional responses to the world depend for their existence on the possession of concerns by their subjects, it seems that there is no "objective" way to judge which, if any, of the often competing emotional responses to a situation is accurate. Watkins and Jolley consider a parallel worry for their realist account of moral perception. In fact, the worry they consider is arguably just the same worry, given their implicit commitment to the thesis that moral perception is a subset of emotional perception – "just as a vintner can only distinguish the qualities of wine if he has the native ability to taste, a virtuous person can only distinguish the moral properties of an action perceptually if he has the native ability to feel approbation and disapprobation."[76] They go on to explain, "on our account, that moral judgments are not insulated from our attitudes gets explained by the fact that moral perception is parasitic on our ability to care. Moral judgments are not insulated from our feelings of approbation and disapprobation for the same reason that perceptual judgments are not insulated from our visual sensations."[77]

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[75] de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*, 151.

[76] Watkins and Jolley, "Pollyanna Realism," 78.

[77] Watkins and Jolley, "Pollyanna Realism," 79.

Watkins and Jolley thus take it that moral perception is emotional perception, grounded in the concerns or cares of the subject, and they consider the worry that the only standard of measurement of the moral value of a situated object is the seemingly subjective concern-based perception of some agent(s), in their view the class of virtuous persons. In reply to this worry, they note that the empiricist principle that empirical claims must be verifiable does not entail that there must be more than one way to verify such claims, nor is there any reason to think that we should accept this stronger principle. Furthermore, that they have to appeal to the virtuous person as their standard of measurement does not threaten the objectivity of moral (and, by extension, emotional) perception since they take it that "what is essential to moral properties is their power to cause a certain judgment by any virtuous person."[78] It is important to make explicit what our authors here leave implicit; namely, that moral properties cause moral judgments in virtuous persons by way of causing them to have emotional perceptual experiences (i.e., feelings of approbation and disapprobation) of such properties.[79] Watkins and Jolley also importantly distinguish the *identifying conditions* of moral properties with the *identity conditions* of moral properties. They note that while the concerns underlying moral perceptions are partially constitutive of the identifying conditions of moral properties in the sense that one must possess concerns (and, I might add, following Roberts, that those concerns must be taken up into one's moral perception) in order to perceive moral

[78] Watkins and Jolley, "Pollyanna Realism," 80.

[79] Though I will not recapitulate their arguments here, Watkins and Jolley go on to provide a compelling defense of their realist account of moral perception that can easily be adapted to the account of emotional perception I defend here.

properties, this does not entail that those concerns are even partially constitutive of the moral properties the experiences of which they enable.[80]

These observations reveal that whatever subjectivity emotional perception might exhibit does not undermine the perceptual thesis of emotions. Although emotions' dependence on concerns does distinguish emotional perception from sense perception in the sense that emotional perception is essentially evaluative, while sense perception is not, the relationship between emotions and the concerns on which they are based does not entail that emotions are not perceptual states.

The concern-based nature of emotions raises another worry for the perceptual thesis, however, that is not connected to concerns about subjectivity. Following Roberts, I have argued that an emotion is essentially an evaluative perceptual or construal state, the terms of which are partially constituted by the concerns on which the emotion is based. I have also noted that the concerns basic to emotions are often, though not always, desires. According to some compelling recent work on the nature of desire, desires themselves are, at least in part, evaluative perceptual states.[81] Graham Oddie argues, for example, that, barring non-cognitivism about value judgments, we must have some

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[80] Watkins and Jolley use this distinction to reject the view that moral (or, more broadly, value) properties are secondary properties. They write, "In claiming that we have a hand in identifying moral properties, we align ourselves with those arguing that moral properties are secondary properties. But moral properties, on our view, are *not* secondary properties. That is the point of the claim that we have no hand in constituting moral properties. On our view, moral properties are relationally specified non-relational properties. Moral properties are not, we maintain, reducible to their identifying conditions (nor to anything else)" ("Pollyanna Realism," 76).

[81] See, e.g., Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*; Oddie, *Value, Reality, and Desire*; Thomas M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 33-55; and Dennis Stampe, "The Authority of Desire," *Philosophical Review* 96, no. 2 (1987): 335-82.

experiences of value that serve as our source of value data. He argues that such experiences must function as defeasible reasons for value judgments, while also accounting for the close connection between value judgments and motivation for action.[82] He rejects appealing to intuitions on the grounds that intuition is merely an empty place-holder term for any mental state satisfying the demands of one's theory of value experiences.[83] He thus recommends that we look for candidates for experiences of value among such mental states as approvals, emotions, feelings, and desires, concluding on the basis of the following argument that desires are the best available candidate:

> When I desire that P, P has a certain magnetic appeal for me. It presents itself to me as something needing to be pursued, or promoted, or preserved, or embraced. Now the good just is that which needs to be pursued, or promoted, or preserved, or embraced. So my desire that P certainly involves P's seeming good (seeming to be worth pursuing). It is but a small step from there to identifying the desire that P with the experience of P's seeming (appearing, presenting itself as) good. Further, if desires are experiences of value, it is easy to show that they also satisfy the second desideratum. They connect value judgments to motivation in a direct and immediate way.[84]

Talbot Brewer argues independently for virtually the same thesis, calling it the "evaluative outlook conception of desire," i.e., "that desires are *seemings* of goodness or of reasons for action."[85] I think there is good reason to accept at least something in the neighborhood of the thesis Brewer and Oddie propose; namely, that desires, and concerns more generally, do seem to involve (in the sense that they are partially constituted by) perceptions or experiences of value. This thesis thus amounts to a rejection of the

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[82] Oddie, *Value, Reality, and Desire*, 54.

[83] Oddie, *Value, Reality, and Desire*, 41.

[84] Oddie, *Value, Reality, and Desire*, 55; cf. Oddie's earlier presentation of this argument – his "experience conjecture" – on p. 41.

[85] Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, 25.

popular method of distinguishing perceptions and beliefs from desires on the basis of their "directions of fit."[86] According to standard usage, beliefs and perceptions have a mind-to-world direction of fit, while desires have a world-to-mind direction of fit; roughly, we want our beliefs and perceptions to conform to the way the world really is, but we want the world to conform to our desires.[87] If desires are or involve perceptions of value, however, they would seem, at least insofar as they are perceptual, to have a mind-to-world direction of fit. Brewer and Oddie's thesis thus threatens the use of the direction of fit metaphor to distinguish (perceptual) emotions from desires.[88] Nevertheless, both Brewer and Oddie express optimism that their thesis can be shown to be compatible with the perceptual thesis of emotion.[89] Oddie, for example, writes:

> It may be that some emotions can be identified with desires, while others involve richer complexes involving beliefs and sensations as well as desires. But it is plausible that emotions all have a desiderative component; so the theory of value experience I am advocating here can happily appropriate the insights of the broad tradition which identifies particular emotions, or emotions in general, as a source of a [*sic*] value data.[90]

It seems from this passage that Oddie would reconcile his thesis with the perceptual thesis of emotions by arguing that emotions are perceptual experiences of

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[86] The "direction of fit" metaphor can be traced to Elizabeth Anscombe (*Intention* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1957]). John Searle later influentially used the metaphor to distinguish desires from perceptions and beliefs *(Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983]).

[87] See John Milliken, "In a Fitter Direction: Moving Beyond the Direction of Fit Picture of Belief and Desire," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 11 (2008): 563-71, for an argument against the usefulness of the metaphor for this purpose.

[88] Cf. Roberts' use of the direction of fit metaphor to distinguish emotions from desires (*Emotions*, 147).

[89] Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, 130-1.

[90] Oddie, *Value, Reality, and Desire*, 77.

value in the sense (and only in the sense) that the desires (partially) constitutive of emotions are perceptual experiences of value. To do so, however, would be to reject the perceptual thesis of emotion in favor of a perceptual thesis of desire. Indeed, if Brewer and Oddie are right, that is, if desires are at least partially constituted by perceptions of value, this raises the question whether emotions involve any perception of value beyond that already "built in" to the concerns in which they are based. It is to this question that I now turn.

I contend that the evaluative perception characteristic of emotional experience is distinct from whatever evaluative perception might belong to the desires basic to emotional experience. Perhaps the best way to see this is to consider the rich array of evaluative concepts employed in human experiences of value. As Brewer observes, "We welcome things, and are pleased by things, under the guise of the just, the kind, the funny, the elegant, the philosophically illuminating, the ironic, the loyal, the friendly, the dignified, the gracious, the human…the list could be extended at length."[91] Brewer goes on to note, several pages later, that our perceptual experiences of disvalue and the evaluative concepts they employ are similarly fine-grained:

> We sometimes view people or things as ugly, grotesque, monstrous, fearsome, filthy, debauched, rotten, graceless, clumsy, superficial, sentimental, boorish, humorless, clownish, tiresome, trivial, boring—the list could be extended ad *nauseam*. It is true that these are all ways of finding things bad, or disapproving of them. However, to point this out is merely to bring out a family resemblance among these evaluative outlooks, and not to deny that there is a great deal of variation both in the kind of badness that they bring into view and in the mode of disapproval that each of these kinds makes apt.[92]

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[91] Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, 140-1.

[92] Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, 158.

Brewer takes these facts about our experiences of value to reveal that it is a mistake to conceive of all desires and aversions as "thin" pro- or con-attitudes, such as mere approvals or disapprovals, or as mere reasons for action, the evaluative content of which does not vary. He writes, "trying to make sense of value with only this generic sort of approval would be like trying to convey one's aesthetic reactions to paintings in a museum by describing their features in non-evaluative terms then holding one or two thumbs up or down to convey the directionality and intensity of one's approval or disapproval. It would be a recipe for inarticulacy."[93] While I agree with Brewer's conclusion that our evaluative perceptions are too varied to be considered mere "thin" pro or con reactions, his arguments equally well support the conclusion that the evaluative concepts employed in evaluative perception are more fine-grained than those employed in desires and concerns.

While Brewer and Oddie might be right that when someone desires some object or state of affairs, P, she experiences or perceives P as good (valuable, worthy to be pursued), the evaluative concepts employed in desires and other concerns do not seem to admit of much variety beyond this. Of course, when I desire a piece of chocolate and I desire that my son flourish, I do not view my possession of the chocolate and my son's flourishing as valuable to the same degree; nor do I see them as valuable in the same way. Here lies the truth behind Brewer's observation that our desires are not merely "thin" pro or con (thumbs-up or thumbs-down) attitudes. This explains why merely stating that one has a desire or a concern does not reveal much about the state one is in if one does not go on to identify the object of one's concern. As Roberts explains, "If we wish to identify a

[93] Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, 141; Brewer credits Frithjof Bergmann ("The Experience of Value," *Inquiry* 16 [1973]: 249-50) with the internal analogy.

concern more particularly, we get little help from our concern vocabulary and must be told what the concern is about."[94] Yet, it seems that even if we had a more complex concern vocabulary, it would still fall short of being able to express the content of many of our evaluative experiences. Indeed, it seems that in our desires, concerns, attachments, etc., we at most experience things as having certain degrees of kind-relative value, where the kinds in question are rather broad – e.g., food value, personal value, artistic value, perhaps ultimate value in the case of God, etc. Such kind-specific value distinctions, while "thicker" than mere pro or con attitudes and more robust than mere reasons for action, do not account for the vast variety of human experiences of value and the evaluative concepts employed therein.

One cannot, in fact, account for the full array of our (perceptual) experiences of value without appealing to emotions. Recall, for example, Temple Grandin's inability to experience the sublimity of the Rockies. Evidently, Grandin did not lack a desire or concern for the Rockies or for aesthetic beauty or greatness, but rather she lacked an emotional appreciation of their sublimity. While one might desire an object (and, if Brewer and Oddie are right, experience it as valuable) *because* it is sublime, this is not the same as experiencing or construing an object as sublime, as one might in the emotion of awe. In other words, one might judge that an object is sublime and then form some desire or concern for the object on account of its sublimity, thereby seeing its sublimity *as valuable*, but the range of the evaluative content of concerns does not itself enable perception of the sublime object *as sublime*.

[94] Roberts, *Emotions*, 146.

Desires are, of course, very fine-grained with respect to what I have called above their descriptive (conceptual) content; that is, they might employ rich and varied concepts in describing their objects. I might, for example, have a desire to eat mint-chip ice cream after dinner, or I might have a concern for the well-being of Nigerian children who lack access to healthy water, or I might have an attachment to a particular way of phrasing a particular point in chapter one of my dissertation. These are quite specific concerns in the sense that they employ complex conceptual content in their representations of their objects. And it is easy to imagine much more complex and conceptually rich concerns or desires. It is important to distinguish, however, the richness and complexity of the non-evaluative content of concerns and the richness and complexity of the evaluative content thereof. In and through concerns one might view ice cream as valuable in a food-type way and one might view suffering Nigerian children as valuable in a person-type way and one might view a particular phrase as valuable in a literary-type way, but one cannot experience objects as sublime, mysterious, frustrating, funny, generous, offensive, unjust, awesome, horrible, admirable, and so on, without the help of emotions such as awe, intrigue, dissatisfaction, humor, gratitude, anger, indignation, reverence, horror, admiration, and so forth. One might judge that an object instantiates these properties without the aid of occurrent emotions, but that is not to say that one can experience them as such without the aid of occurrent emotions. As evidence of the emotional nature of much of our experiences of value, it is telling that in his attempts to demonstrate the ways in which desires involve complex and varied experiences of value, Brewer consistently appeals to examples, not of desires, but of paradigmatic emotional experiences including fear, delight, the musical emotions, sympathy, jealousy, admiration, grief, gratitude, and

wonder.[95] Indeed, attempting to account for the richness and complexity of our evaluative perceptions through concerns or desires apart from emotions is, to appropriate Brewer's phrase, "a recipe for inarticulacy."

3. Conclusion

In light of the structural and functional parallels between emotion and sense perception examined above, it is plausible to conclude that emotions are a kind of perception, though, as I mentioned at the outset, one might consistently reject some aspects of my perceptual account of emotions without rejecting the perceptual thesis of emotion. While emotion is similar to sense perception in many significant ways, emotions are distinct from sense perceptions in that they are evaluative perceptual states, grounded in and shaped by the concerns of their subjects. I have argued that even if those concerns are themselves perceptual experiences of value, the perceptual thesis of emotion is not threatened, since many of our evaluative perceptions employ concepts not employed in concerns (at least not as terms in the perceptual construals constitutive of concerns). In the chapters to follow, I shall further defend the perceptual thesis of emotion by arguing for some important similarities between the ways in which sense perceptions and emotions contribute to our achievement of various epistemic goods.

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[95] Brewer's examples can be found on the following pages of *The Retrieval of Ethics*: fear (26), delight (60, 180), the musical emotions (104), sympathy (111, 174), jealousy (113), admiration (156-7), grief (176), gratitude (180), and wonder (160-1).

CHAPTER TWO

Emotion and Epistemic Justification

As we observed in chapter one, emotions often give rise to beliefs. Five-year-old Hannah becomes afraid of a noise outside her bedroom and consequently forms the belief that she is in danger. Jorge arrives at a party and immediately feels uneasy about the behavior of those present. Despite not being able to articulate what it is about their behavior that is making him uneasy, his uneasiness causes Jorge to judge that this party is not a good place to be. Sandra feels guilty for reporting that her husband abused her and as a result of her feelings of guilt she judges that she is morally blameworthy for her report of the abuse.

The fact that emotional experience often suggests or issues in belief, even if it does not always do so, reveals a human proclivity to trust, at least implicitly, emotions as conveyers of information about the world. The fact that we so regularly trust our emotions by forming beliefs on the basis of our emotional experiences raises the question whether we are ever right to trust them. Put slightly differently, this phenomenon raises the question whether emotional experience, which is often a source of belief, is ever a source of justified or rational belief. The majority view among philosophers is that emotional experiences are not capable of providing justification for beliefs, except perhaps in the uninteresting way that they might provide justification for beliefs an agent forms about her emotional experiences (e.g., that she is angry, or that grief feels like this). In defense of this view, Michael Brady has recently argued that while there might be some truth underlying perceptual accounts of emotion, the analogy between sense

perception and emotion breaks down at precisely this point.[1] According to Brady, emotions, unlike sense perceptions, cannot serve as justifying reasons or evidence for belief. Hence, Brady argues, insofar as the perceptual thesis of emotion entails that emotions are capable of performing the epistemic justificatory function of sense perceptions, the perceptual thesis fails.[2]

Against this view I argue that emotions can and do function as justifying reasons or evidence for belief. Put a bit differently, emotion is a (potential) source of epistemic justification. Call this the *justificatory thesis of emotion* (or justificatory thesis for short). The justificatory thesis is not the claim that an agent can form a justified belief on the basis of an inference from her awareness of her emotional states, but rather the claim that emotions themselves can confer justification on beliefs formed non-inferentially out of emotional experience, as, for example, sense perceptions can confer justification on sense perceptual beliefs. The justificatory thesis, or variations thereof, has been suggested and supported in limited ways in recent literature, but discussions of it often have been buried within discussions of other issues and occasionally have suffered from a lack of clarity.[3]

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[1] Michael Brady, "Emotions, Perceptions, and Reasons," in Carla Bagnoli, ed., *Morality and the Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[2] Brady remains open about just how much the perceptual thesis does entail the epistemological parallels between sense perception and emotion in question. He writes in the conclusion to his article, "It is unclear to what extent these differences threaten the perceptual model of emotion. If, for instance, the account of how emotions enable us to access values is a relatively small part of the perceptual model, then the perceptual theorist need not be overly concerned with the criticisms raised above. But if, as I suspect, part of the point of the perceptual model is to provide an adequate epistemology for our knowledge of value, then the fact that emotional experience doesn't by itself provide reasons or evidence for evaluative judgment or belief would appear to be more damaging."

[3] See, e.g., Sabine Doering, "Explaining Action by Emotion," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 53 (2003), 229-30, and "Conflict Without Contradiction," in George Brün,

I shall thus clarify the justificatory thesis, situating it with respect to recent work on the epistemology of justification as well as the epistemology of emotions, and offer a sustained defense of the thesis against the most challenging objections to it. Since the justificatory thesis, if true, reveals a significant epistemological parallel between emotion and sense perception, by defending the justificatory thesis, I shall thereby lend further support to the perceptual thesis of emotion introduced in chapter one.

1. Clarifying the Justificatory Thesis of Emotion

The justification in view in the justificatory thesis is, first and foremost, *epistemic* justification. I shall occasionally refer to it as *emotion-based epistemic justification*, reserving the term *emotional justification* for the justification, if any, that emotions themselves enjoy, which might not be purely epistemic in nature.[4] By epistemic justification I mean the sort of justification enjoyed by agents with respect to their beliefs and, perhaps, with respect to other propositional attitudes (e.g., disbelief, withholding).[5]

Ulvi Doguoglu, and Dominique Kuenzle, eds., *Epistemology and Emotions* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 93; Catherine Z. Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," in Brün, et. al. (2008), 33-50; Terrence Cuneo, "Signs of Value: Reid on the Evidential Role of Feelings in Moral Judgment," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 14:1 (2006), 69-91; Robert C. Roberts, "Emotions and Judgments about Risk," in Sabine Roeser, ed., *Emotions and Risky Technologies* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010): 107-27; Christine Tappolet, "The Irrationality of Emotions," in D. Weinstock, ed., *Philosophical Perspectives on Irrationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); Ralph Wedgewood, *The Nature of Normativity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 10; Sabine Roeser, *Moral Emotions and Intuitions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), esp. pp. 234f. To his credit, Brady's is perhaps the clearest and most focused, albeit the most challenging, discussion of the justificatory thesis to date.

[4] See Patricia Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons: An Inquiry into Emotional Justification* (New York: Routledge, 1988), for use of the term *emotional justification* to refer to the justification emotions themselves enjoy.

[5] I do not mean to suggest here that epistemic justification is fundamentally *doxastic justification*, as opposed to *propositional justification*. While the justification I have in

Epistemic justification has long been thought to be necessarily (albeit partially) constitutive of knowledge. Hence, though the kind of justification to which emotions are capable of contributing is not sufficient for knowledge, even when combined with true belief, it might play an important and perhaps even a necessary role in constituting knowledge. Insofar as the justificatory thesis of emotion is true, therefore, there is good reason to think that emotions are capable of contributing to our achievement of knowledge. For present purposes, however, I do not wish to complicate matters by focusing on knowledge, so I shall limit my discussion to the relationship between emotion and epistemic justification.

Whether one's belief is justified in the sense relevant to the justificatory thesis is determined, at least in part, by the reasons one has for the truth of that belief and by whether and to what extent one's belief is based on those reasons. I do not here intend to suggest that the justification in view requires that the agent be aware (potentially or actually) of the reasons for her beliefs, as argued by proponents of what has been called variously *awareness internalism*, *accessibilism*,[6] or simply *internalism*.[7] Nor do I mean to suggest here that the justification in view depends solely on the supporting and basing relations between an agent's beliefs and her evidence, as argued by proponents of what

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view is perhaps most easily identified as the sort of justification agents enjoy with respect to their beliefs, I leave open the question whether that justification reduces to justification agents have with respect to propositions they may or may not believe.

[6] For this terminology, see Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, *Evidentialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[7] For this terminology, see Michael Bergmann, *Justification without Awareness: A Defense of Epistemic Externalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

has been called *evidentialism* or *mentalism*.[8] Neither am I committed to it being the case that the reasons relevant to epistemic justification must be mental states. My claim that epistemic justification has to do with reasons is consistent with externalist theories of justification on which justification depends on some factor – "reason" broadly construed – external to the agent's mental states (e.g., the belief being formed through a reliable process or through the agent's functioning properly). At least some externalists are comfortable referring to such external (i.e., non-mental-state) conditions for justification as "reasons."[9]

In addition to being neutral with respect to internalism and externalism, the justificatory thesis of emotion is also neutral with respect to foundationalism and at least some versions of coherentism. In conjunction with perceptual accounts of emotions, such as the one I have developed and defended in chapter one, the justificatory thesis is compatible with coherentist theories that allow a justificatory role for appearance states in addition to beliefs.[10] The justificatory thesis is also compatible with hybrid views, according to which beliefs can enjoy some (foundational) justification from experiences, apart from coherence, even though coherence is necessary to raise one's beliefs over the threshold of rationality.[11]

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[8] Conee and Feldman, *Evidentialism*.

[9] See, e.g., Bergmann, *Justification without Awareness*.

[10] For a defense of the claim that coherentists can and should allow appearance states to play a justificatory role, see Jonathan Kvanvig and Wayne D. Riggs, "Can a Coherence Theory Appeal to Appearance States?" *Philosophical Studies* 67 (1992): 197-217.

[11] For defenses of such hybrid views, see Susan Haack, "Double-Aspect Foundherentism: A New Theory of Empirical Justification," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53, 1 (1993), 113-28, and Keith DeRose "Direct Warrant

The justificatory thesis is similarly neutral with respect to a wide variety of theories of emotions. One might, for example, hold an externalist theory of justification and a non-cognitive theory of emotions according to which emotions do not themselves have cognitive (or propositional) content, but are rather merely physiological states that nevertheless generate beliefs. On such a view, the justificatory thesis would amount to the claim that emotions, though not themselves possessed of cognitive content, can justify the beliefs to which they give rise when they do so reliably or when they are otherwise properly functioning. By contrast, one might hold an internalist or evidentialist theory of justification in conjunction with a perceptual account of emotions. On such a combination of views, the justificatory thesis might amount the claim that emotions can and sometimes do function as undefeated (mental state) evidence for the beliefs to which they give rise.

While I will occasionally appeal to various features of the perceptual account of emotions developed in chapter one in order to illustrate how emotions might contribute to the justification of beliefs, the justificatory thesis does not entail the truth of the perceptual thesis, let alone my own perceptual account. Moreover, my defense of the justificatory thesis does not depend on, but rather supports, the perceptual thesis. Likewise, while I might occasionally use language that naturally lends itself to one theory of justification over others, my defense of the justificatory thesis of emotion is adaptable, perhaps with minor modification, to most of the major (non-skeptical) theories on offer.

Realism," in Andrew Chignell and Andrew Dole, eds., *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 150-172.

In short, I take it that whatever type of epistemic justification sense perceptions are capable of providing, emotions are capable of providing the same.

2. The Repulsive Statue and Other Cases

As an initial argument in favor of the justificatory thesis of emotion, consider the following case that plausibly involves emotion-based epistemic justification. In the introduction to his *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*, Malcolm Gladwell recounts the following story.[12] In September of 1983 an art dealer offered to sell a *kouros* – a Greek sculpture of a nude male youth – to the J. Paul Getty Museum in California for $10 million. Over the next several months the Getty cautiously investigated the statue to determine whether it was authentic. Their findings satisfied the Getty and they agreed to buy the statue.

The Getty began to worry, however, when a few experts who viewed the statue immediately expressed doubts about its authenticity. The Getty thus decided to send the statue to Athens to have Greece's foremost sculpture experts examine it. One of these experts was Angelos Delivorrias, director of the Benkai Museum in Athens. Gladwell recounts Delivorrias' report of his experience of the statue: "He spoke at length on the contradiction between the style of the sculpture and the fact that the marble from which it was carved came from Thasos. Then he got to the point. Why did he think it was a fake? Because when he first laid eyes on it, he said, he felt a wave of 'intuitive repulsion.'"[13] As it turned out, Delivorrias and the other experts were right. The statue was determined

[12] Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2005), 3-8.

[13] Gladwell, *Blink*, 6.

upon further examination to be, most likely, a fake.[14] Gladwell concludes, "When [Delivorrias and the other experts] looked at the kouros and felt an 'intuitive repulsion,' they were absolutely right. In the first two seconds of looking – in a single glance – they were able to understand more about the essence of the statue than the team at the Getty was able to understand after fourteen months."[15]

On Roberts' concern-based construal account of emotion, we might understand Delivorrias' emotional reaction to the kouros in the following way. Given his concern for the authenticity of purportedly ancient sculptures and his years of experience through which he acquired certain sense perceptual skills with respect to the identification of marks of authenticity/inauthenticity in sculptures like the kouros, Delivorrias' repulsion presented the statue to him as flawed, forged, or otherwise inauthentic; that is, he construed the statue as deficient or odd in some way relevant to the context of its being sold to the Getty as an authentic sixth-century piece. To see that Delivorrias' emotional reaction to the statue was shaped by his concerns for artistic authenticity and informed by his special perceptual training, it is worth pointing out that his reaction was not necessarily an aesthetic one in the narrow sense.[16] Someone with good aesthetic taste, but who lacked Delivorrias' concerns and perceptual training, might have had a very different and much more positive emotional reaction to the statue. Moreover, their differing reactions might both have been appropriate responses to the statue – the statue is a fake *and* it is beautiful. Delivorrias' concern was not with beauty, but with authenticity.

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[14] Gladwell notes that the picture of the kouros in the Getty's catalogue is accompanied by the following note: "About 530 BC, or modern forgery" (*Blink*, 8).

[15] Gladwell, *Blink*, 8.

[16] I am grateful to Bob Roberts for suggesting this point.

Although Gladwell's account of Delivorrias' psychological history leaves many questions unanswered, it is at least initially plausible that Delivorrias' belief that something about the statue was not right – i.e., that the statue exhibited some, perhaps inarticulable, signs of inauthenticity – was formed immediately and non-inferentially out of his emotional experience. Granting that we know very little about Delivorrias' prior belief set, his perceptual and emotional acuity, and his cognitive history, it is not difficult to imagine the details of the case in such a way that his belief that the statue was inauthentic (or flawed in some unspecified way) came to him justified at least in large part by his immediate emotional reaction of repulsion toward the statue, despite the counterevidence of the Getty's fourteen-month investigation having 'proven' the statue authentic. At least, I suspect this will not be difficult for those not antecedently committed to rejecting the justificatory thesis of emotion.

Incidentally, Gladwell is antecedently committed to rejecting the justificatory thesis of emotion and would, therefore, contest the interpretation of Delivorrias' response I offer here. In his explanation of the main theme of *Blink* Gladwell writes,

> It's a book about rapid cognition, about the kind of thinking that happens in a blink of an eye. When you meet someone for the first time, or walk into a house you are thinking of buying, or read the first few sentences of a book, your mind takes about two seconds to jump to a series of conclusions. Well, "Blink" is a book about those two seconds, because I think those instant conclusions that we reach are really powerful and really important and, occasionally, really good. You could also say that it's a book about intuition, except that I don't like that word. In fact it never appears in "Blink." Intuition strikes me as a concept we use to describe emotional reactions, gut feelings – thoughts and impressions that don't seem entirely rational. But I think that what goes on in that first two seconds is perfectly rational. It's *thinking* – it's just thinking that moves a little faster and operates a little more mysteriously than the kind of deliberate, conscious decision-making that we usually associate with "thinking."[17]

[17] Gladwell, www.gladwell.com/blink, accessed June 21, 2010.

I agree with Gladwell that the term "intuition" is often (and unhelpfully) used, especially in moral and other evaluative contexts, to pick out judgments formed non-inferentially on the basis of emotional experience.[18] I disagree, however, with Gladwell's assumption that such judgments are inherently irrational or unjustified. It seems that it is Gladwell's antecedent rejection of the possibility of rational or justified 'intuitive' perceptual judgments, whether they be sensory or emotional, that leads him to conclude that the immediate cognitive reactions he chronicles are rapid inferences as opposed to non-inferential Reidian acquired perceptions, as described in chapter one. I contend that such perceptual beliefs, including emotion-based beliefs, are no more inherently irrational (unjustified) than beliefs formed on the basis of inferences.

Consider the following cases, all of which plausibly involve emotion-based epistemic justification. A Nazi commander witnesses a young Jewish girl being treated cruelly by a Gestapo officer, feels compassion for her, and as a result of his compassion he (justifiedly) judges that she is a person of worth, despite the counterevidence of the testimony of his Nazi peers.[19] Lucy, a young girl with no prior experience or knowledge of snakes, comes across a King Cobra while on a hike, becomes afraid when the Cobra lunges and hisses at her, and as a result of her fear Lucy forms the (justified) belief that she is in danger. After seeing the distraught face of a woman from whom he just stole,

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[18] In fact, I take it that when people speak of their "moral intuitions" they often are referring to moral judgments they have formed on the basis of an emotional response to (perception of) some real or imagine moral scenario(s). For a recent defense of this claim, see Roeser, *Moral Emotions and Intuitions*.

[19] I have been told that Hermann Goering, the Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe during WWII and Hitler's appointed successor, recounted an experience like this in his memoirs, though, sadly, he resisted the belief suggested by his compassion.

Oliver, who has been trained from a young age to be a thief and to believe that stealing is okay, feels guilty for stealing and as a result (justifiedly) believes that his stealing from the woman was wrong. Despite having been convinced by her friends that any man who ever tries to help a woman is demeaning her, Samantha feels grateful for an offer of help from her male neighbor, and her gratitude causes her to judge (justifiedly) that he has done her a good turn. By isolating the emotions involved from other likely reasons to form the seemingly justified evaluative beliefs in question, cases such as these, like the repulsive statue case, reveal the justificatory thesis to be at least *prima facie* plausible.

3. Explaining Justified Evaluative Beliefs

In addition to making sense of plausible cases of emotion-based epistemic justification, the justificatory thesis also best explains the fact that each of us has a large stock of justified evaluative beliefs. We justifiedly believe (and many of us *know*), for example, that slavery is unjust, that friendship is valuable, that sunsets are beautiful, that integrity is laudable, that rotting meat is disgusting, that children are precious, that generosity is admirable, that the Jewish Holocaust of the 1940s and the Rwandan genocide of the 1990s were horrific, and so on. Whence the justification for these beliefs? Barring testimony, it would seem impossible to enjoy justification for evaluative beliefs apart from some direct experience of the value-laden states of affairs they are about. And, if there are such experiences, it is plausible that they can function as reasons or evidence (i.e., *prima facie* justifiers) in precisely the way that sense perceptual experiences do. This thesis will be especially compelling to those who find attractive the view known as phenomenal conservatism, according to which all experiential "seemings"

are *prima facie* reasons to believe things are the way they seem.[20] As Graham Oddie argues,

> the visual experience of a bright red rose – that is to say, the rose's appearing bright red to me – gives me a reason to believe that the rose really is bright red….If there are genuine experiences of value, they could stand to values as ordinary perceptual experiences stand to the objects of perceptual experience. An experience of the goodness of P, say, would be the state of P's *seeming* (*appearing*, *presenting itself as*) *good*, where this seeming is an experiential, non-doxastic take on the value of P. If there is such a state as the experience of the goodness of P, then, by analogy with the perceptual case, it would give me a reason to believe that P is good.[21]

While Oddie, Talbot Brewer, and others have posited desires as the most plausible candidates for such experiences of value, I have already shown in chapter one why desires and even the broader class of concerns cannot account for the full range of our evaluative experiences and our corresponding justified beliefs. Indeed, some of our experiences of value (and disvalue) involve evaluative concepts that are more finely grained than the evaluative concepts characteristic of desires and concerns. Recall the story of Temple Grandin recounted in chapter one. Lacking a sufficiently rich concept of sublimity, Grandin had difficulty even forming the belief that the Rockies are sublime, let alone forming that belief justifiedly on the basis of a direct experience of their sublimity.[22]

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[20] For a concise statement and defense of phenomenal conservatism, see Michael Huemer, "Compassionate Phenomenal Conservatism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74 (2007): 30-55.

[21] Graham Oddie, *Value, Reality, and Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 40.

[22] I will develop this point more fully in chapter three, drawing out more of its epistemological consequences.

Just as we must understand emotions as experiences of value in order to make sense of all of our evaluative experiences, so too we must understand emotions as having epistemic justificatory force (i.e. as conferring epistemic justification) if we are to make sense of the justification for our evaluative beliefs. How do we come to believe justifiedly (and, we might add, to know) that sunsets are beautiful, that generosity is admirable, or that friendship is valuable? Part of the story is surely that we have particular emotional experiences in response to situations involving sunsets, generosity, and friendship. Our justification for these beliefs could come through testimony, but then there would have to be an original testifier and an account of that testifier's original justification. In any case, we do not ordinarily come to believe that sunsets are beautiful through testimony, but rather through (emotional) experiences of sunsets; in particular, through a kind of aesthetic admiration or awe.

The fact that we enjoy justification for many of our evaluative beliefs and that at least some such justified evaluative beliefs seem to require emotional experience for their justification, if not for their very formation as well, renders the justificatory thesis of emotion quite plausible.

4. Three Major Objections and Replies

Having considered some cases that reveal the justificatory thesis to be initially tenable and having shown that the justificatory thesis offers the best explanation of the justification we have for our evaluative beliefs, I now turn to a thorough consideration of the most challenging objections to this traditionally unpopular view.

4.1 The Unreliability Objection

The first objection to the justificatory thesis we must consider is the unreliability objection. Even if emotions are in some sense sources of information about the world, so the objection goes, they are far too unreliable ever to justify emotion-based beliefs. This is, perhaps, the most obvious and commonsensical of the objections to the justificatory thesis. After all, if we know that Cretans are liars, we should not expect to be able to form justified beliefs on the basis of the testimony of Cretans. Likewise, since we know that our emotions often mislead us into believing falsehoods, we cannot form justified beliefs by trusting them.

In his introduction to a discussion of the standard sources of epistemic justification Matthias Steup articulates a version of this objection. He explains that

> Beliefs arise in people for a wide variety of causes. Among them, we must list psychological factors such as desires, emotional needs, prejudice, and biases of various kinds. Obviously, when beliefs originate in sources like these, they don't qualify as knowledge even if true. For true beliefs to count as knowledge, it is necessary that they originate in sources that we have good reason to consider reliable. These are perception, introspection, memory, reason, and testimony.[23]

Steup's mention of emotions alongside desires, prejudices, and biases in contrast with the standard sources of epistemic justification/knowledge reflects the common view that emotions are not capable of justifying beliefs because of their unreliability as sources of true or accurate beliefs (or, rather, because of their reliability as sources of false or inaccurate beliefs). This is an expression of the unreliability objection and it is a central

[23] Matthias Steup, "Epistemology," in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2007 Edition)*, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2007/entries/epistemology.

feature of the view, which Catherine Elgin has called "the standard view," that emotions and reason are antithetical.[24]

I do not deny that, as Steup suggests, a belief formed solely to satisfy an emotional need is not a justified belief. Nevertheless, I maintain that beliefs originating out of (or through) emotional experiences can be justified by such experiences. The first thing to note in reply to the unreliability objection is that, just as with the standard sources of justification, the fact that a source of belief is unreliable in some cases or for some individuals does not entail that the source in question is never capable of generating justified beliefs. Defenders of both internalist and externalist theories of justification have resources to explain this feature of the epistemology of justification.

According to internalist and evidentialist theories of justification, there might be and often are overriding factors that prevent the *prima facie* justification of a particular source of belief from becoming *ultima facie* justification without rendering the source impotent to justify in every case. As William Alston explains concerning sense perception – a source that is generally taken to be very reliable (at least in favorable environments) – "for most of our beliefs, including perceptual beliefs, what we typically identify as a justifier provides only *defeasible, prima facie* justification."[25] In other words, the general reliability of a source does not guarantee that the *prima facie* justification of beliefs originating in or through the source will not be defeated. Likewise, widespread defeat of the *prima facie* justification provided by a source of belief, perhaps due to evidence of its unreliability in generating true beliefs, does not

[24] Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," 33.

[25] William Alston, "Perceptual Knowledge," in John Greco and Ernest Sosa, eds., *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 223.

entail similar defeat of the *prima facie* justification provided by that source in every circumstance or for every agent. On such accounts, then, a particular emotional experience might fail to provide justification for a belief formed on the basis of that experience in case the subject has evidence that counts against trusting her emotional experience or conflicts with the propositional content of the experience.[26] The mere fact that the *prima facie* justification conferred by emotional experience is often (perhaps much more often than the justification conferred by sense perception) defeated by overriding factors, however, does not entail that the *prima facie* justification provided by emotion can never result in *ultima facie* justification.

Moreover, if certain externalist theories of justification are true, an emotion's being unreliable or malfunctioning in a particular case might mean that the emotion does not even grant *prima facie* justification. In other words, an emotional experience might fail to justify beliefs formed on the basis of the emotion if the agent is not functioning properly in having that emotion (or in trusting it), or if the relevant emotion-disposition is an unreliable guide to the value of its objects. However, this does not threaten the justificatory thesis, so long as emotions are not always unreliable or malfunctioning sources of belief. Even sense perception, a paradigmatic source of justified beliefs, is likewise unreliable at least some of the time. Indeed, we have a variety of resources from the epistemology of justification for explaining how it is that emotion-based epistemic justification might be defeated (or might not arise) in many cases and for many individuals without such defeat undermining the justificatory thesis of emotion – i.e., the

[26] Wedgewood (*The Nature of Normativity*, 243) offers a version of this conflicting evidence account of defeaters in his discussion of the justification conferred by moral intuitions, which he takes to involve emotions in important ways.

thesis that emotions can and sometimes do function as reasons or justifiers for beliefs.

Yet, the worry might remain that emotions seem so highly unreliable that they are never a source of justification or that even if they might be a source of *prima facie* justification, whatever epistemic justification emotional experience might be capable of providing in theory will always be defeated by considerations of unreliability, malfunctioning, counterevidence, etc. The second thing to note in response to the unreliability objection, then, is that some emotions are, at least for some agents, quite reliable indicators of the relevant features of their situational (or situated) objects. Compassion, for example, seems to be a generally reliable indicator of what it is about; namely, the suffering or distress of some creature of worth.[27] In other words, even though most people arguably do not experience compassion often enough, compassion is typically experienced in response to situations involving the suffering of creatures of worth. There are, of course, sentimental and histrionic people who seem to feel (and may in fact feel) compassion often in cases in which no one is in any significant distress.[28] Such individuals are unlikely to be justified in believing that someone (or something of moral worth) is in distress on the basis of their compassion responses even when they 'see' the situation accurately, since their accuracy is merely a happy accident. Most people, however, do not typically experience compassion for inanimate objects or for people who are not in some significant distress and are thus likely to be justified in trusting their compassion responses. That is, when they feel compassion for someone,

[27] Cf. Roberts' discussion of what he calls the "defining proposition" for compassion (*Emotion*, 295).

[28] I am grateful to Bob Roberts for suggesting this objection.

they are likely to be justified in believing on the basis of that emotional experience that the object of their compassion is in some significant distress.

By contrast with compassion and comparably reliable sense perceptions, our non-visual sensory faculties are typically not well enough attuned to the world to be capable of justifying very specific or sophisticated beliefs about our environments. The average person's olfactory sensitivity, for example, is insufficient to justify olfactory beliefs about the specific kinds of flowers in a bouquet. Yet, it should not surprise us to learn of individuals (botanists or florists perhaps) whose senses of smell trained through extensive experience with flowers make their olfaction sufficiently adept to confer such justification. Hence, while emotion may be on the whole a less reliable source of epistemic justification than sense perception and the other standard sources, it is not radically so. Whatever justificatory epistemic authority sense perception has, emotion seems to have the same.

Moreover, while many people have a tendency to trust unreliable emotions, so too do many people have a tendency to trust unreliable sense perceptions. Consider, for example, overconfident novice musicians who regularly form false beliefs about the accuracy of a performer's pitch on the basis of unreliable auditory sense. Consider also the amateur wine taster who, lacking the humility to admit her own lack of skill, regularly forms false beliefs about the quality of wines on the basis of poorly trained olfactory and gustatory sensitivity. As with sense perception, introspection, memory, reason, and testimony, the fact that some agents have a tendency to trust unreliable instances of emotions does not entail that emotions cannot function as justifying reasons for belief,

but merely that developing one's emotional sensitivities can make one a better epistemic agent, improving one's stock of justified beliefs.

4.2 The Emotional Justification Objection

The justificatory thesis of emotion entails that the justification conferred by emotions does not reduce to justification conferred by another source of reasons to believe. In other words, if the justificatory thesis is true, emotions are themselves reasons to believe, albeit defeasible reasons, that do not merely transmit justification from another (non-emotional) source to beliefs; emotions are, epistemically speaking, unjustified justifiers. The justificatory thesis, therefore, seems in tension with the observation that emotions are often said to be justified or unjustified. For, if emotions are proper objects of justification, it might seem that they are not themselves reasons to believe, but rather that the reasons which justify emotions likewise justify the beliefs corresponding to those emotions (i.e., emotion-based beliefs).[29]

[29] For the sake of brevity I shall continue to refer to the apparently justified beliefs that seem to arise out of emotional experience as "emotion-based beliefs." I recognize, however, that this terminology is controversial. The proponent of the emotional justification objection might contend that in apparent cases of justified emotion-based beliefs, either the belief is not justified or the belief was not formed on the basis of emotional experience (and, hence, is not an emotion-based belief after all), but rather the emotion and the belief were both formed on the basis of awareness of certain non-emotional reasons. I have already argued in chapter one that we do form beliefs directly and non-inferentially on the basis of emotions and I take it that this claim is relatively uncontroversial, so I will not rehearse my arguments for it here. And, as the cases considered in section two above reveal, at least some such emotion-based beliefs seem to be justified. I shall thus continue to refer to such seemingly justified beliefs as emotion-based beliefs, even though one response available to proponents of the emotional justification objection is to grant, in any given case, that the belief in question is justified, but deny that it was formed directly and non-inferentially on the basis of emotional experience. In the commonsense spirit of saving the appearances, I contend that such an objector must provide a reason for denying that the belief is emotion-based and, as the

Put slightly differently, the objection is this: only justified emotions seem capable of contributing to the justification of emotion-based beliefs; therefore, in cases of apparent emotion-based epistemic justification, the most plausible explanation for the justification of the emotion-based beliefs in question is that the justificatory work is accomplished not by the emotions themselves, but rather by the non-emotional reasons which also justify the emotions. Why, in other words, should we posit emotions as justifying reasons to believe if, in every case of justified emotion-based beliefs, there are non-emotional reasons that are sufficient by themselves to justify the beliefs in question? Call this the emotional justification objection, since it explains the epistemic justification of emotion-based beliefs in terms of the reasons responsible for emotional justification (i.e., the justification emotions themselves enjoy). The emotional justification objection thereby reduces (in an eliminative way) emotion-based epistemic justification to non-emotion-based epistemic justification. Indeed, according to the emotional justification objection there is no emotion-based epistemic justification for beliefs; rather, emotion-based beliefs, like emotions themselves, are justified, if at all, by non-emotional reasons alone.

Even if we grant, as I think we should, that unjustified emotions are not capable of contributing to emotion-based epistemic justification, for the emotional justification objection to succeed in undermining the justificatory thesis it still must be shown that the reasons responsible for emotional justification are sufficient for the epistemic justification of the beliefs in question. For, if the reasons responsible for emotional justification are

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arguments in this section will reveal, the emotional justification objection is no such reason.

not always sufficient for the epistemic justification of emotion-based beliefs, then it remains plausible to hold that emotions sometimes contribute to the epistemic justification of emotion-based beliefs by functioning as new or additional reasons to believe. In order to determine whether the reasons to feel (have, experience) an emotion are, in all cases of justified emotion-based beliefs, sufficient reasons to believe in accordance with the emotion, we must clarify the nature of reasons to feel; that is, we must clarify the nature of emotional justification. Thus, before responding to specific versions of the emotional justification objection that have been offered in the recent philosophical literature I will respond in a general way to the objection by sketching an analysis of emotional justification. This analysis, while only a brief sketch, will reveal that the reasons responsible for emotional justification are not sufficient for the epistemic justification of emotion-based beliefs.

What is it for an emotion to be justified? In what is, to my knowledge, the only book-length treatment of this question, Patricia Greenspan argues that emotional justification involves both evidential reasons for the emotion (i.e., backward-looking "appropriateness") and practical reasons for the emotion (i.e., forward-looking "applicability").[30] In other words, she argues that when assessing emotional justification, we must consider whether the emotion is appropriate to its object as perceived by the bearer of the emotion, where appropriateness (or "fit") is understood in roughly epistemic, evidential terms, as well as the practical (instrumental) value that experience of the emotion holds for its bearer, such as the therapeutic value of experiencing grief over the death of a loved one or the moral and relational value of experiencing gratitude

[30] Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons*.

toward a judge for administering justice even though in doing so she does nothing beyond what is morally and legally required of her. Perhaps the direction of fit metaphor is of some use here. Emotional appropriateness, for Greenspan, is characterized by a mind-to-world direction of fit; that is, an emotion is appropriate just in case the propositional content of the emotion fits (i.e., accurately represents) the state of affairs it is about. Emotional adaptiveness, on the other hand, has a world-to-mind direction of fit; that is, the practical value of having an emotion is a 'reason' to have the emotion only in the sense that experiencing the emotion is likely to have some desired effect on future states of affairs (i.e., change the world to fit one's desires). For present purposes, we can leave aside consideration of whatever practical reasons (or justification) there might be for experiencing emotions, since such considerations are irrelevant to the question of whether the evidential reasons for emotions are, in all relevant circumstances, sufficient for the epistemic justification of emotion-based beliefs. Moreover, I take it that the concept of emotional justification, at least as understood and employed in ordinary discussions of the emotions, is not concerned with the practical value of emotional experiences, but rather with the "appropriateness," to appropriate Greenspan's phrase, of their evaluations of their objects.[31]

Thus setting aside considerations of whatever practical justification there might be for experiencing certain emotions, emotional justification seems, at least initially, to involve two primary components: an emotion is justified for an agent S just in case (1) S's beliefs about the object of the emotion on which the emotion is based are

[31] Greenspan herself seems to acknowledge the priority of this conception of emotional justification by referring to emotional appropriateness as "the justification of the emotions themselves" (*Emotions and Reasons*, 8).

(epistemically) justified, and (2) the emotion is an appropriate (i.e., fitting or accurate) response to the situation as S (justifiedly) believes it to be.[32] Let me unpack each of the components a bit. To put the first condition negatively, if one's beliefs about an object on which one's emotional response to that object are based (following Roberts, I will call these beliefs basic to the emotion) are themselves (epistemically) unjustified, then one's emotion is not (emotionally) justified. For example, if George believes on the basis of scant evidence or a mere irrational hunch that his wife is having an affair, his emotion of jealousy that is based on those beliefs is unjustified.

This condition does not entail that the beliefs basic to the emotion must be true in order for the emotion to be justified, but only that those beliefs be justified. To see this, consider the tragic case of the Michigan couple whose daughter, Whitney, was, along with four of her friends, pronounced dead at the scene of a car accident in April of 2006. The only passenger to survive, badly injured, was identified by the coroner as Whitney's friend, Laura. Mourning the loss of their daughter, Whitney's parents held a funeral for her only to discover five weeks later that the girl they had buried was not their daughter, but Laura, who had been misidentified at the scene of the accident. Whitney had survived and while her family was mourning her death, she had been recovering in the hospital under the care of Laura's family. While Whitney's family would no doubt have

[32] Emotions are sometimes assessed as unjustified according to a third criterion, i.e., when one has overriding reason to believe one's emotion is inaccurate. That one believe one's emotion to be accurate (or not believe it to be inaccurate) is not, however, a condition on emotional justification. Instead, this is a case where on has overriding *reason to believe* that one's emotion is unjustified since one has reason to believe it is inaccurate (and accuracy to the situation as one believes it to be is a condition on emotional justification). One therefore judges the emotion to be unjustified. Merely having reason to believe that an emotion is unjustified does not entail that it is in fact unjustified.

mourned Laura's death at the time of the accident had she been correctly identified, their grief *for Whitney's death* was based on the false belief that Whitney had died. Using the language of Roberts' concern-based construals analysis, we might say that Whitney's family construed Whitney as dead (or, rather, they construed Whitney's *having died* as an irrevocable loss of someone of great significance to them[33]), though she was in fact alive. Yet, surely their grief was justified. On the present analysis, the judgment that their grief was justified is explained in part by our recognition that their belief that Whitney had died, while false, was nevertheless justified, grounded as it was in the authoritative testimony of the coroner.

That the beliefs basic to an emotion are justified, however, is not a sufficient condition for the justification of the emotion. The emotion must also be an appropriate or fitting response to the object as it is justifiedly believed to be. Put negatively, if one's emotion is not an appropriate response to the situation as it is justifiedly believed to be then one's emotion is not justified. Had Whitney's family members responded to the news of her tragic death with emotions of relief, joy, pride, or envy, we would not say that their emotions were justified because those emotions do not fit the situation as they believed it to be. This is not to say that there is one and only one justified emotion for every value-laden state of affairs. Had the car crash been caused by a drunk driver or by the recklessness of Whitney's friend who was driving, her family might have responded justifiedly in anger with the driver at fault, as well as in grief over the loss of their

[33] For a thorough analysis and defense of the conception of grief I employ here, see Roberts, *Emotions*, 235-240. In addition to the irrevocability of the loss and the great significance of the object, Roberts emphasizes the way grief sees the object as nonfungible.

daughter. While grief and anger would be responses to different salient aspects of the situation, such varying responses would be warranted or justified by the evaluative complexity of the situation.

Assessments of emotional justification are thus dependent on judgments concerning the value (and disvalue) in the world that is there to be experience (or, perceived). For emotional justification, one must not only be justified in believing what one does about the non-evaluative features of the object, one must also form an accurate evaluative construal of the object (i.e., one must get the value of the perceived situation right). On Roberts' concern-based construals analysis, this entails that one must have proper concerns, since those concerns function as terms of emotional construals, giving shape to the evaluative content of emotions. Had Whitney's family not experienced grief or some other appropriate emotion in response to Whitney's reported death, their failure to do so might have indicated that their concern for Whitney was not what it should have been.

While brief and merely suggestive, the foregoing analysis is sufficient for the present purpose of defending the justificatory thesis against the emotional justification objection. For, the analysis reveals that emotional justification does not depend on antecedent non-emotional justification for the relevant emotion-based beliefs. According to this analysis, emotional justification depends on accurate evaluative construals (perceptions) of objects as they are justifiedly believed to be. Emotional justification thus does indeed depend on epistemic justification for some of the beliefs relevant to emotional experience, but only for the beliefs basic to emotions, not for the beliefs consequent to or based on emotions.

Consider, for example, the case of the reluctantly compassionate Nazi mentioned in section two above. In order for his compassion for the young Jewish girl to be justified, it must have been an appropriate emotional response to the situation as he justifiedly believed it to be. He presumably was justified in believing (on the basis of sense perception) that she was a human being and that the Gestapo officer was handling her roughly and that she was grimacing (or crying, or screaming). Given the lamentable evidential situation the Nazi general had placed himself in, informed primarily by the overwhelming testimony of his Nazi peers, however, it is not hard to imagine that at the moment prior to his experience of compassion for the Jewish girl he lacked epistemic justification for believing that this Jewish girl was a person of moral worth or that her suffering was a bad state of affairs. Yet, assuming he had not completely forgone his basic concern for the well-being of other people and assuming that he had somehow maintained a fairly reliable (might we even say virtuous?) compassion disposition, perhaps by avoiding any direct contact with the cruel treatment of Jews and other victims of Nazi brutality, it is plausible that his experience of compassion might have caused him to form a direct and non-inferentially justified emotion-based belief that the Jewish girl was a person of moral worth who was suffering and whose suffering was a significant evil. For present purposes, however, we do not need to assume that he justifiedly formed this emotion-based belief, but rather only that antecedent (non-emotional) epistemic justification for this belief was not a necessary condition for his emotion of compassion to be justified. Indeed, it seems that his evidence concerning the salient non-evaluative features of the situation, together with the fact that compassion was indeed an appropriate

emotional response to the situation as he justifiedly believed it to be, is sufficient to justify his compassion.

It will likely be objected at this point that sense perception of the non-evaluative features of the Nazi case would be sufficient by itself to justify the evaluative belief that the girl is a person of moral worth who is suffering and whose suffering is evil. It is difficult to see how this might work, however, without some direct experience of the value (disvalue) in question. How might justification for believing that the girl is human (as opposed to a non-human creature), that the Gestapo officer is treating her this way and that, and that she is responding this way and that, immediately and non-inferentially justify an evaluation of the situation that employs terms like *worth*, *suffering*, and *evil*? Indeed, the only way for the deliverances of mere sense perception to contribute to the justification of an evaluative belief is by providing premises in an argument that would then need to include some premises concerning the worth of people like this (or this particular person) and the evil of this kind (or this instance) of suffering. It is not plausible, however, that our Nazi worked through anything like this kind of inference, since he is, by hypothesis, predisposed to reject any such connecting premises. It is nevertheless plausible that he might form the evaluative belief in question as a result of his experience of compassion. What this reveals, then, is that the reasons responsible for his emotional justification are not sufficient to explain the justification for his emotion-based belief.

With this general response to the emotional justification objection in mind, let us now turn to two versions of the objection that have been developed in the recent philosophical literature. The first version I will consider is Peter Goldie's. Goldie

argues that for any given emotion both the emotion, which he identifies at least in part as a feeling, and the corresponding judgment that the object of the emotion has the "emotion-proper property" in question can be justified.[34] For Goldie, the reasons "external to the emotion itself and the perception"[35] that simultaneously and directly justify emotional feelings and their correlative judgments are the states of affairs that justified emotions (correctly) evaluate. So, to use Goldie's example, one's judgment that a piece of maggot infested meat is disgusting and one's corresponding feeling of disgust directed toward the meat are both justified by the fact that the meat is maggot infested.[36] Implicit in Goldie's analysis is the assumption that the propositional contents of justified emotions and their corresponding evaluative beliefs must fit (i.e., accurately represent) the facts or states of affairs that justify them. Goldie's analysis thus commits him to the surprising principle that only true or accurate emotions and true evaluative beliefs (i.e., emotions and emotion-based beliefs that get their objects right) are justified.[37] This is

[34] Peter Goldie, "Emotion, Feeling, and Knowledge of the World," in Robert C. Solomon, ed., *Thinking About Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 91-106.

[35] Goldie, "Emotion, Feeling, and Knowledge of the World," 98.

[36] Goldie, "Emotion, Feeling, and Knowledge of the World," 98.

[37] Some have suggested that such fittingness might come apart from the moral appropriateness of experiencing (or entertaining) certain emotions. In other words, there might be moral or practical reasons for experiencing certain emotions even when the available evidence does not support the propositional content of the emotion (or, alternatively, the propositional content of the belief to which the emotion gives rise). In keeping with my primary goal of exploring the relationship between emotion and epistemic justification, I shall here limit my discussions of emotional fittingness to questions of the accuracy (truth) of propositional representation. For discussions of the distinction between emotional "fit" and the moral propriety of emotions see Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobsen, "The Moralistic Fallacy: on the Appropriateness of Emotion," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 61, 1 (July, 2000): 65-90; and

clearly mistaken. Granting for the sake of argument that emotions can be justified, it certainly must be possible to have a justified emotion that is nevertheless unfitting. And the fact that epistemic justification for beliefs does not reduce to truth is perhaps as well established and widely held as any view in epistemology. We will thus need to turn elsewhere for a more viable statement of the emotional justification objection.

Michael Brady has recently articulated a version of the emotional justification objection that avoids the problematic assumptions in Goldie's version. Brady's argument begins, as does Goldie's, with the observation that emotions are "reasons-responsive" (i.e., justifiable). Brady argues further that we normally do not treat emotional experience as a reason to believe, but rather as a reason to look for reasons (or evidence) that either confirm or disconfirm the propositional content of the belief suggested by the emotion. He writes,

> Consider the experience of fear, when trying to get to sleep at night, upon hearing a noise downstairs. In such circumstances we are motivated to seek out and discover additional reasons or evidence. In particular, we are motivated to seek out and discover considerations that have a bearing on whether our initial emotional appraisal – namely, that we are in danger – is accurate. We strain our ears to hear other anomalous noises, rack our brains trying to think of possible non-threatening causes for the noise, and so forth. It is unlikely that, in these circumstances, we would regard our feeling of fear as a conclusive reason to judge that we are in danger.[38]

Brady concludes, "[t]he fact that emotions, but not perceptions, can themselves be responses to reasons – and reasons which we are motivated to bring to awareness – suggests that the justificatory story we tell with respect to evaluative beliefs will be rather

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Robert C. Roberts, "Emotional Consciousness and Personal Relationships," *Emotion Review* 1 (2009): 281-8.

[38] Brady, "Emotions, Perceptions, and Reasons," (forthcoming).

different from the justificatory story we tell with regard to empirical beliefs."[39] Brady's argument, as stated, poses a challenge to a strong foundationalist reading of the justificatory thesis, namely, the claim that at least some emotional experiences by themselves are capable of providing full justification for emotion-based beliefs (absent defeaters, of course). Yet, as explained above, the justificatory thesis is compatible with at least some coherentist theories of justification, as well as hybrid theories, according to which no source of belief is capable of conferring the degree of justification necessary to render a belief justified or rational, apart from coherence with other beliefs and appearance states. Defenders of the justificatory thesis might, therefore, grant Brady's argument and conclude with Catherine Elgin that, as compared with sense perceptual experiences, emotional experiences "need more collateral support in order to be [fully] tenable," while maintaining that "to have less initial tenability [than sense perceptual experiences] is not to have none. The very fact that [emotional experiences] present themselves as indicators of how things stand gives them some degree of initial tenability."[40]

Defenders of the justificatory thesis need not, however, grant Brady's argument. While we often withhold believing on the basis of emotional experience until we have found additional corroborating evidence, this is by no means a universal phenomenon. We often treat our emotional experiences as sufficient reasons for corresponding beliefs.

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[39] Brady, "Emotions, Perceptions, and Reasons," (forthcoming).

[40] Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," 40. I am assuming, with Brady, that what Elgin means when she writes that emotions have some "initial tenability" is that though they are capable of serving as reasons or evidence for belief, they are not capable of serving as conclusive reasons, and so they require further support from and/or coherence with additional reasons.

That is, we often trust our emotions, even when we should not. In fact, as I suggested in chapter one, the standard view that emotions are in opposition to rationality is generally motivated by the observation that we so often form beliefs on the basis of unreliable emotional experiences. Moreover, we often have visual and auditory experiences that compel us to look or listen more closely before forming any beliefs about the objects of our experiences. The fact that we occasionally treat sense perceptual experiences, not as sufficient reasons to believe, but rather as reasons to look for more supporting evidence does not undermine the ability of sense perceptual experiences to justify beliefs. Brady's argument thus provides no more reason to reject emotion as a source of epistemic justification than we have to reject sense perception as a source of epistemic justification.

Brady offers a further argument against the justificatory thesis, however, this one also grounded in the fact that emotions admit of some kind of justification. Brady argues that "if emotional experiences are reasons, then they should presumably fit easily into the class of considerations which clearly do function as reasons or evidence for evaluative beliefs. These considerations will include facts about what we might call the 'emotion-relevant features' of some object or event." To illustrate what he means by "emotion-relevant features," Brady explains, "the fact that the large dog has sharp teeth, a short temper, is off its lead, and is advancing rapidly towards me are all good reasons for me to believe that it is dangerous." Brady takes it that such (apparent or perceived) facts are "emotion-relevant features" because "they are precisely the kinds of considerations that we seek out when assessing the accuracy of our initial emotional appraisals." Hence, Brady concludes in agreement with Goldie, that "considerations which constitute reasons

for evaluative judgments are equally reasons for the relevant emotional response."[41] Herein lies a problem, it seems, for the justificatory thesis. Put briefly, given that reasons for evaluative beliefs also seem to function as justifying reasons for the corresponding emotions, if emotions can serve as reasons for evaluative beliefs, then it seems that emotions can serve as justifying reasons for themselves, and this they obviously cannot. As Brady puts the point, "my fear of the dog cannot be a reason to judge that the dog is dangerous, since then we would have to conclude, from the fact that I am afraid of the dog, that I have good reason to be afraid of the dog. And fear, we might think, cannot justify itself in this way."[42]

The problematic premise in Brady's argument is his implicit assumption that all of the reasons for evaluative beliefs are equally reasons for the corresponding emotions. Even if it were the case that some of the reasons that confer justification on evaluative beliefs are also reasons that confer justification on the corresponding emotions, it would not be clear why we should think that this holds of all such reasons. Why, in other words, should we accept that if emotions are capable of serving as justifying reasons for beliefs, they must share all justificatory functions in common with other non-emotional reasons for belief? Indeed, no such generalization is defensible. For, while it might be correct to say in some sense that both emotions and the reasons that justify emotions are reasons for beliefs, they do not justify beliefs *in the same way*. To see this we must get clear on the distinction between direct or non-inferential reasons and indirect or inferential reasons.

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[41] Brady, "Emotions, Perceptions, and Reasons," (forthcoming).

[42] Brady, "Emotions, Perceptions, and Reasons," (forthcoming).

Suppose I knowingly put on a pair of blue-tinted glasses and then walk down the road until I happen upon a stop sign that I have never seen before. Given my knowledge that objects which appear purple when viewed through blue-tinted glasses are likely some shade of red, the appearance of the stop sign as purple is a reason for me to infer that the stop sign is red. Likewise, given my memory that all the stop signs I have ever seen were red, the appearance of this stop sign as a stop sign (i.e., an octagonal road sign with the block letters S-T-O-P in the center), together with my awareness that I am wearing color-distorting glasses, can provide some inferential justification for my belief that the stop sign I am now looking at is red. In other words, the purple appearance of the stop sign and the stop sign's appearing to me as a stop sign (albeit a non-red one) are reasons for my belief that the stop sign is red in the sense that they can serve as premises in a strong inductive argument for the conclusion that the stop sign is red. Now suppose I take off the glasses and again look at the stop sign. This time the stop sign appears red to me; that is, I see it, perceptually construe it, as red and, moreover, I have no evidence that my color-perception is being distorted. In this case my perceptual experience directly, i.e., non-inferentially, justifies my belief that the stop sign is red. To arrive at a justified belief that the stop sign is red, I need not infer anything from my experience. The experience itself (or, the experience as it coheres with some subset of my other mental states) directly issues in a justified belief that the stop sign is red. Keeping before us this distinction between two different ways for an experience to be a reason for a belief, we are now in a position to see why Brady's assumption – that emotions must share all justificatory features with non-emotional reasons for belief if they are to share any – is mistaken.

While emotions are capable of functioning as direct, non-inferential reasons for their corresponding evaluative beliefs, the sorts of non-emotional and non-evaluative reasons Brady cites are only capable of serving as indirect, inferential reasons for evaluative beliefs. A perceptual experience of an approaching, snarling dog that is off its leash can serve as a direct, non-inferential reason to believe that there is an approaching, snarling dog that is off its leash. It cannot, however, directly and non-inferentially justify a belief that the dog is *dangerous* to the subject. For, the experience is not an experience of the dog as dangerous to the subject; that is, the propositional content of the experience does not contain the concept *dangerous to me* (or *mine*). The emotional experience of fear toward an approaching, snarling dog, however, is an experience (a construal) of the dog as dangerous to the subject or the subject's own; that is, fear of the dog presents the dog as dangerous to the subject of the experience. Lacking, as it does, this evaluative content, the non-emotional experience of the dog as approaching, snarling, and off its leash can at best be an indirect, inferential reason for believing that the dog is dangerous to oneself. Absent a fear response, one might justifiedly infer that the dog is dangerous to oneself based on the past association of features such as snarling and being unleashed with the emotional experience of danger to oneself. Yet, an inference, even a very rapid one, is not the same as a direct experience. And, only an evaluative experience is capable of serving as a direct, non-inferential reason for an evaluative belief.

We thus ought to reject Brady's claim that emotions must be able to justify themselves if they are capable of justifying corresponding evaluative beliefs, grounded as it is in the implicit principle that if emotions can serve as reasons for beliefs they must share all justificatory features with other non-emotional reasons for beliefs, including the

capacity to be reasons for emotions. We have seen at least one significant way in which emotions and non-emotional experiences might differ with respect to their justificatory role, despite both being reasons for belief. Brady's worry about the justificatory thesis entailing the self-justification of emotions is, therefore, unfounded.

One might, however, reformulate Brady's argument, based on the observation that evaluative beliefs sometimes serve as justifying reasons for their corresponding emotions. The justified belief that one is in danger might, for example, serve as a reason to be afraid. That is, one might on the basis of an inference from perception of an approaching, snarling, unleashed dog, form the evaluative belief that the dog is dangerous, thereby justifying one's fear of the dog. If it is possible for evaluative beliefs to serve as reasons for their corresponding emotions in this way and it is possible for emotions to serve as justifying reasons for their corresponding evaluative beliefs, as per the justificatory thesis, then Brady's worry about the self-justification of emotions reasserts itself.

In reply, I admit that the justificatory authority of emotion drops out whenever and insofar as an emotion derives its justification from the evaluative belief that shares its propositional content (as opposed to the beliefs basic to the emotion that do not share its full, evaluative propositional content). Yet, this does not preclude emotion from functioning as a source of justification. To see why, consider that a similar observation can be made concerning at least one other source of justification – testimony. Though testimony is considered by many to be a source of justification, it is also a dependent source, in the sense that in order to enjoy justification for a belief *p* formed on the basis of testimony, one must first have some non-testimonial (typically perceptual) justification for the belief that the testifier testified to *p*. With such dependent (basic) sources of

justification, the evidence provided by the source cannot be any stronger than the evidence for the beliefs on which the source depends. So, if I do not have good reason to believe that you testified (or are testifying) to some proposition *p*, then, *a fortiori*, I do not have good reason to believe *p* on the basis of your testimony.

Like testimony, emotions are a dependent source of justification.[43] If I am to enjoy justification from my emotion for the belief that a situation has some evaluative property, then I must have some (non-emotional) epistemic justification for believing that the non-evaluative features of the situation are as I take them to be. So, for instance, if the appearance of an approaching, snarling dog causes me to feel fear and my fear causes me to believe I am in danger, the justification for my belief that I am in danger is no stronger than my justification for believing that a snarling dog is approaching. Sometimes, though, I feel fear because I believe that I'm in danger (or I begin to feel angry because I believe that someone has wronged me). In that case, my emotion doesn't contribute any justification to my fear-belief. Insofar as an emotion depends on (i.e., is grounded in) one of its corresponding evaluative beliefs, it is incapable of contributing additional justification to that belief. This, however, does not entail that emotions are never capable of serving as (non-circular) reasons for those beliefs, since emotions do not always depend on, but rather sometimes serve as the source of, certain consequent beliefs. Sometimes, for instance, I do not feel guilty because I (antecedently) believe that I have done moral wrong; I feel guilty just because I see the thing I did and then I believe that what I did was morally wrong because of my guilt. I thus conclude that even this reformulation of Brady's argument fails to show that the justificatory thesis entails any

[43] I am grateful to Dan Johnson for helpful discussion on this point.

problematically circular self-justification of emotions. Indeed, none of the versions of the emotional justification objection succeed against the justificatory thesis.

4.3 The No Citation of Emotions Objection

One final objection to the justificatory thesis is grounded in the observation that, while we might trust emotions as sufficient reasons for belief at least some of the time, we rarely cite emotions as our reasons for believing as we do. We tend rather to describe the non-evaluative features (sometimes referred to as the "natural properties") of the situational objects of our emotions. Recall that Delivorrias' first response to the query about why he believed the statue was a fake was to cite reasons other than his emotions, including the contradiction between the style of the piece and the geographic origin of the material out of which it was sculpted. One might even think that Delivorrias only appealed to his emotional experience of the statue after he had run out of what he took to be 'good' (i.e., justifying) reasons for his belief. Indeed, most of us rarely cite our emotions as our reasons for believing as we do even when we have formed the belief(s) in question primarily or solely out of an emotional experience. This fact, so the objection goes, reveals that our emotions are not justifying reasons for our corresponding evaluative beliefs.[44]

To see that this objection to the justificatory thesis fails, one must first appreciate the distinction between having a reason or justification and being able to give a reason or justification in conversation. It often happens when we base our beliefs on perceptual

[44] This is perhaps the observation behind Brady's claim that while we occasionally treat emotions as justificatory "proxies" for non-emotional evidence, once we become aware of the non-emotional reasons for a belief, we cease to treat the emotion as if it has any justificatory force ("Emotions, Perceptions, and Reasons").

evidence or reasons that our reasons for believing as we do are not sharable with others. Were I to try to convince someone that I had good reason for believing that it is raining outside I might explain that I see the rain when I look out the window, or I might just point at the rain and expect my interlocutor to have the same perceptual experience I am having. I am especially likely to use the pointing strategy when I am attempting to convince a skeptical interlocutor that it is raining outside or that my perceptual experience is good reason to believe that it is raining. Since I cannot actually present my interlocutor with my evidence – i.e., *my* perceptual experience of the rain – if they are unwilling to trust my testimony that I have had such a justifying experience, the best I can do is to point and hope that they will gain similar perceptual evidence of their own.

Given our society's widespread skepticism about the trustworthiness of emotions and the prevalence of emotional disagreement, it should not be surprising that most cases in which we are asked to give reasons for an emotion-based evaluative belief are cases in which citing our emotional experience alone will neither be satisfying nor convincing to our interlocutor. Recognizing this, we often avoid appealing to emotional experience, choosing instead to describe the non-evaluative features of its situational object in the hopes that our interlocutor will experience a similar emotional reaction to the situation as described, thereby gaining emotional reasons of her own for the evaluative belief in question. This is analogous to pointing in sense perception cases.

Given the way that evaluative properties supervene on non-evaluative properties and given our powers of imagination, by describing the non-evaluative properties of a situation to someone, we can as it were place the value-laden state of affairs before her mind in hopes that she will have a similar emotional reaction and, as a result, form the

evaluative belief in question. So, when someone asks why we find some situation unjust, instead of citing our indignation toward the situation, we describe the non-evaluative details of the situation and then expect our interlocutor to see it as unjust through her own response of indignation, or some similar emotion.

Of course, given that our emotions are informed and shaped not only by our non-evaluative perceptual sensitivities, but also by our concerns, emotions are even more perspectival and personal that sense perceptions. Hence, evoking empathetic emotional understanding in our interlocutors will often take a considerable amount of rhetorical skill. And, as Thomas Reid explains concerning the ability to use humor or ridicule and the emotions it evokes for the sake of such rational, emotional persuasion, "some have from nature a happier talent for ridicule than others."[45] And so it goes with all forms of emotional persuasion. It thus sometimes happens that one's interlocutor has a very different emotional reaction (or no emotional reaction at all) to the situation as one presents it. This might be due to the fact that one's interlocutor does not share one's concerns, or it might be due to one's lack of rhetorical effectiveness in describing the situation. Emotion disagreement is also sometimes due to the fact that people differ in their perceptual sensitivity to the non-evaluative features of situations. Some people, for example, are better than others at detecting signs of pain in a person's face, or at perceiving subtle physical movements that might be relevant to the evaluation (and evaluative perception) of some action or event, as, by analogy, professional basketball

[45] Reid, *EIP* VI iv, 606. For a development of Reid's thesis that humor (or ridicule) and the emotions it evokes (e.g., amusement, embarrassment) can be used to persuade skeptics rationally to accept foundationally justified beliefs, see Daniel M. Johnson and Adam C. Pelser, "Foundational Beliefs and Persuading with Humor: Reflections Inspired by Reid and Kierkegaard," (under review).

referees are better at detecting fouls than are casual basketball fans. The prevalence of emotional disagreement thus does not entail that the objects of emotional experience do not have any evaluative properties that really are there to be experienced by those whose concerns and sensitivities to the non-evaluative as well as the evaluative features of situations enable such accurate experience. Hence, neither the fact of emotional disagreement nor the fact that we rarely appeal directly to our emotional states when asked to give the reasons for our evaluative beliefs shows that emotions are not capable of being justifying reasons for beliefs.

5. *The Justificatory Significance of the Virtues*

This last point about the dependency of emotions on concerns for their perceptual accuracy (or truth) suggests that the better formed one's concerns and, more generally, one's character, the more likely one is to arrive at true evaluative perceptual beliefs (at least in favorable environments). This in turn suggests that the better formed one's character, the more likely one is to enjoy emotion-based epistemic justification for corresponding evaluative beliefs. In fact, some may wonder that throughout this discussion of the justificatory authority of emotions, I have said nothing about the virtues. After all, virtues have from antiquity been understood to be character traits, many of which centrally involve dispositions to experience emotions toward the right objects in the right way and to the appropriate degree. One might well think then that an agent's possession of the virtues is bound to have some impact on her ability to enjoy emotion-based epistemic justification. I agree.

Without analyzing emotion-based epistemic justification in terms of virtue (i.e., without giving a virtue epistemology of justification), it is not hard to see how possession

of the virtues might increase the likelihood of enjoying such justification. This is, perhaps, easiest to see with respect to externalist theories of justification. If some version of reliabilism about justification is true, surely possessing the virtues is bound to make one's emotions (or one's process of emotion-based belief formation) more reliable at producing true beliefs (at least in favorable environments) and, thereby, to increase one's stock of justified beliefs. Part of what separates the courageous person from the coward and the rash individual, for example, is her reliability in feeling the appropriate amount of fear in response to impending dangers. If reliabilism is correct, then, the courageous person is far more likely than her non-courageous counterparts to enjoy emotion-based epistemic justification for beliefs she forms on the basis of her fear when she is otherwise uncertain about the extent of the danger she faces. She is more justified than they in trusting her gut, to put it a bit crudely.

Likewise, if proper functionalism about justification is true and we understand virtuous emotions, with Aristotle, to be part of human proper functioning, it is easy to see how trusting our virtuous emotions might itself be an aspect of proper functioning. Given the way that we naturally form beliefs on the basis of emotions – that is, give our natural trust in emotions – it is not at all hard to understand the virtuous person's trust in her emotions as an important part of her proper function. The virtuous person would seem to be functioning properly, not only by feeling fear, anger, gratitude, joy, sorrow, zeal, etc., at the right time, in the right way, and to the right degree, but also by directly and non-inferentially forming evaluative beliefs on the basis of such emotional experiences. Thus, a proper functionalist theory of justification, together with the

justificatory thesis of emotions, nicely explains how improvement in moral (emotional) virtue might enhance one's ability to enjoy emotion-based epistemic justification.

Even on internalist and evidentialist theories of justification, it is plausible that, given the justificatory thesis of emotion, improvement in moral virtue is likely to improve one's stock of justified emotion-based beliefs. For, on a cognitive theory of emotions, such as that developed in chapter one, emotions are capable of functioning as a kind of *prima facie* reason (or evidence) for beliefs. Whatever *prima facie* justification emotions might provide, however, is likely to be defeated for many (non-virtuous) individuals by other evidence that is contrary to the propositional content of the emotions or by evidence that their emotions (or some particular sub-set thereof) are not trustworthy. Possession of the virtues, however, is likely to decrease the number and strength of the defeaters one has for emotion-based epistemic justification. For, the virtuous person will get emotions right more often than the non-virtuous person and this should (at least in favorable circumstances) mean that the virtuous person's emotions are less likely to be defeated by contrary evidence. Moreover, the virtuous person's emotion-based epistemic justification will also not be less susceptible to defeat by evidence of the untrustworthiness of the agent's emotions (since her emotions are, after all, quite trustworthy). The claim that possession of the virtues is justificatorily significant, even if not a necessary condition for justification, is thus consistent with many, if not most, of the major theories of justification on offer.

6. Conclusion

We often trust our emotions. The plausibility of cases of emotion-based epistemic justification, together with the recognition that emotion-based epistemic

justification seems necessary to explain our justified evaluative beliefs, reveals that we are not always irrational in so trusting our emotions. Moreover, the justificatory thesis of emotion is capable of withstanding the most challenging objections to the view. Indeed, the fact that human agents so often form beliefs on the basis of emotional experience despite the unreliability of emotions and other apparent reasons to distrust them (i.e., defeaters) should not lead us to reject emotion as a possible source of justified belief or knowledge, but should rather encourage us to seek out ways to improve our emotional responses to the value in the world (i.e., to grow in virtue), thereby improving our stock of justified evaluative beliefs. Far from undermining the perceptual thesis of emotion, therefore, the relationship between emotion and epistemic justification provides further evidence in favor of the thesis that emotions are evaluative perceptual states.

CHAPTER THREE

Emotion and Understanding

In her recent essay, "Emotion and Understanding," Catherine Elgin attempts to draw together two related trends in recent epistemological discourse.[1] These are, first, the resurgence of reflection on the nature and value of understanding, and, secondly, the recent rise of interest in the epistemology of emotions. Elgin argues that emotions, like sense perceptions, can be direct (though obviously fallible[2]) sources of information about our environment and, like beliefs, can aid our pursuit of epistemic goods by focusing our attention on (orienting us toward) important features of our environment that we might otherwise ignore. She also argues, though less explicitly, that emotions can enhance understanding by cohering with the other varied elements of cognitive systems, including beliefs, perspectives, and methods.

In this chapter I shall draw attention to yet further ways that emotions are capable of enhancing human understanding, especially understanding of value. In fact, I shall argue that emotional experience is necessary for the best and deepest human understanding of value in much the way that sense perception is necessary for the best and deepest human understanding of the sensible world, thereby lending further support to the perceptual thesis of emotion introduced in chapter one. I shall also consider the relationship between emotion and the value of understanding. I conclude that in addition

[1] Catherine Z. Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," in George Brün, Ulvi Doguoglu, and Dominique Kuenzle, eds., *Epistemology and Emotions* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 33-50.

[2] Recall the discussion of Elgin in chapter two.

to enhancing evaluative understanding, emotions are central to our experiences and, hence, our appreciation of the value of understanding.

1. The Nature of Understanding

My theses concerning the relationships between emotion and evaluative understanding and between emotion and the value of understanding rely to varying degrees on controversial views concerning the nature of understanding. I shall thus begin by offering some remarks on what understanding is and what it is not. In the present section I defend four theses that, taken together, comprise an analysis of understanding that, while by no means complete, is adequate for present purposes. First, understanding essentially involves grasping connections and, as such, is conceptual. Second, understanding is factive, though it admits of degrees of facticity. Third, understanding is not undermined by at least some kinds of knowledge-undermining epistemic luck. Finally, understanding is transparent, albeit less than perfectly so.

1.1 Understanding and Conceptual Connections

Although there is much debate over the nature of understanding in current epistemology, it is generally agreed that understanding is essentially a grasping or appreciating of connections. As Jonathan Kvanvig explains in his influential treatment of the value of understanding, "understanding requires, and knowledge does not, an internal grasping or appreciation of how the various elements in a body of information are related to each other in terms of explanatory, logical, probabilistic, and other kinds of relations

that coherentists have thought constitutive of justification."[3] Likewise, Robert Roberts and Jay Wood argue that understanding essentially involves "grasping connections" and "fitting things together."[4] Potential objects of understanding range from the relatively simple (e.g., the meaning of a word or the rules of a simple child's game such as hide-and-seek) to the very complex (e.g., the intricate nexus of socio-political, psychological, environmental, and economic factors that contributed to the recent downturn in the global economy). In the relatively simple case of understanding the meaning of a word, one grasps the connection between the term itself and the object or thought to which it refers. In more complex cases, the connections grasped will be more numerous, more intricate, and often more subtle.

The claim that understanding essentially involves grasping connections entails that understanding is conceptual, though the conceptual nature of understanding is typically left implicit in the literature.[5] Even in relatively simple cases of understanding, the objects (causes, parts, etc.) connections between which the understanding subject grasps must be conceptualized by the subject, even if only in the sense that the subject possesses demonstrative concepts of each of the interconnected features of the object(s) understood (e.g., *that* word, *that* thought, *that* thing, etc.).[6] It might be, in fact, that the

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[3] Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 192-193.

[4] Robert C. Roberts and Jay Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 45.

[5] In one noteworthy exception to my generalization about implicitness, John Bengson and Marc Moffett argue that understanding is "reasonable conceptual mastery" ("Know-How and Concept Possession," in *Philosophical Studies* 136 [2007]: 31-57).

[6] Recall the discussion of demonstrative concepts in chapter one.

simple possession of a concept for some object is a limiting kind of case for understanding.[7] Of course, the more conceptually (and, hence, "informationally") rich one's grasp of the connections inhering in some object or body of information, the deeper one's understanding of that object or information, assuming, that is, that one's grasp is accurate and one's propositional employment of concepts true.

1.2 Understanding and Truth

Knowledge is factive in the sense that knowing that *p* entails that *p* is true. Understanding, likewise, depends on the truth of the beliefs that contribute to one's understanding. Of course, as explored above, some facets of the cognitive achievement of understanding are not propositional at all and, hence, do not admit of truth or falsity in a strict sense, though they might be explanatorily better or worse. And, as Roberts and Wood have aptly pointed out, one can understand a proposition, theory, or other object without the proposition or theory itself being true.[8] In other words, one can understand *p* (where *p* is some proposition, theory, or other object) even where *p* is false. In such cases, the facticity of understanding simply requires that one's grasp of the connections inherent in the propositions or the theory be accurate (i.e., that one's beliefs about how the parts fit together be true).

[7] Reid suggests something along these lines when he writes concerning the concepts involved in perception of secondary qualities that "It is true, indeed, that if we had not some notion [i.e., concept] of what is meant by the heat of fire, and by an inebriating quality [of wine], we could affirm nothing of either with understanding. We have a notion of both; but it is only a relative notion. We know that they are the causes of certain known effects" (*IP* II xvii, 256).

[8] Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 47.

The facticity of understanding is thus primarily concerned with the propositions believed that contribute to understanding. No matter how internally consistent and explanatorily coherent one's cognitive grasp of a subject matter, one does not understand the subject matter if one's beliefs about it are false. So, in order to understand the game of basketball, one cannot hold false beliefs about basketball, or so goes what I will call the strong facticity thesis. It seems, however, that one could understand the game of basketball even if one believed falsely that it was invented in Nebraska instead of Kansas, or if one believed that defenders are allowed four seconds in the key, instead of three, though the falsity of these beliefs might detract from one's understanding. Kvanvig, who defends the facticity of understanding, recognizes this potential objection to the view and concedes that "when the falsehoods are peripheral, we can ascribe understanding based on the rest of the information grasped that is true and contains no falsehoods."[9] Kvanvig thus defends a weak version of the facticity thesis that is in keeping with the fact that understanding comes in degrees. On such a view, it seems likely to be that case that the more of one's peripheral beliefs are false, or the less peripheral (more central) one's false beliefs are, the less well one understands. Applying this view to the examples just mentioned, in the former case we should say that though one might understand the game of basketball in the sense that one understands the rules of basketball, the current state of the sport, or even something of its history, one fails fully to understand its origins (or its history very well). In the latter case we should say that while one might understand the rules of basketball to some degree, one's understanding of the rules of basketball is diminished on account of the false belief concerning the three-seconds rule. And the

[9] Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, 201.

more central the three-seconds rule is thought to be, the less well will one be thought to understand.

Elgin has objected that even Kvanvig's weak facticity thesis is too strong, arguing that it is appropriate to attribute understanding (more than merely "honorifically," that is, *really* to attribute it) in cases where the beliefs an agent has about some complex subject matter are not "strictly true."[10] She claims that scientific knowledge regularly involves the use of idealizations, such as the ideal gas law, that are strictly false, but that nevertheless enable valuable understanding of natural phenomena. She objects further that according to Kvanvig's view epistemology offers no avenue for evaluating one cognitive state better than another for being closer to the truth, where both are not strictly true and, hence, not instances of understanding.[11]

I read Elgin as defending the view, not that understanding is not factive, but that understanding is factive in a weaker sense than Kvanvig seems to allow. Were Elgin's claim that understanding is not factive, this would be inconsistent with her commitment to the principle that the closer to the truth one's beliefs about a subject matter are, the better one's understanding of that subject matter is (assuming some degree of understanding is, in fact, present and all other things being equal). Elgin is right to claim that understanding can be had even where it depends heavily on propositions that are not

[10] Catherine Z. Elgin, "Is Understanding Factive?," in Allan Millar, Adrian Haddock, and Duncan Pritchard, eds., *Epistemic Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 325-6.

[11] Elgin writes, "Perhaps we could accept Kvanvig's dismissal of such uses of 'understanding' as merely honorific if they applied only to young children and novices. I tend to think otherwise, however, for I think epistemology should have something to say about what makes the views of the child who thinks humans evolved from apes better than the views of a child who thinks humans did not evolve or evolved from butterflies" ("Is Understanding Factive?," 325).

strictly true, such as ideal laws, but all this shows is that the truth requirement on the beliefs relevant to understanding is not a *strict-truth* requirement. Kvanvig nowhere commits himself to such a strict-truth requirement. It must be noted, furthermore, that even where such idealizations are at work, the theorist who believes that things actually are as the idealization represents them seems further from genuine understanding (or, rather, understands less well) than the theorist who merely treats the idealization as true, recognizing (i.e., understanding) that it is merely an idealization. As suggested above, herein lies one way in which understanding admits of degrees; namely, where understanding is had, the closer to the truth the relevant beliefs, the better the understanding. As Roberts and Wood explain, "Just as a proposition is thought to be true in virtue of matching the state of affairs that it is about, so understanding anything typically has to be more or less adequate to what it is about. When the object is complex and deep, like one's wife or a great text, the understanding of it can be indefinitely *more* right, *more* adequate, *closer* to the 'truth.'"[12]

We can follow Elgin's rejection of a strict-truth requirement for understanding without committing to her implicit suggestion that understanding is the only, or even the best, category epistemologists have for evaluating one suitably coherent cognitive state better than another for being closer to the truth. There is obviously a point on the veracity continuum at which one's beliefs about a body of information are so far from the truth that we should not attribute understanding at all. And yet, even below this threshold it seems appropriate to identify some beliefs as closer to the truth than others. What resources does Elgin think are available to the epistemologist in such cases? It seems to

[12] Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 44.

me that *closer to the truth* is a fitting evaluative category for such cases. So, scientific theories that make advances in what is typically called "scientific understanding" might be advances in understanding, or they might just be closer to the truth than their predecessors, while still short of understanding. Rather than thinking that epistemology must accommodate all of the scientific community's attributions of understanding, it seems better to conclude with a touch of humility that some of what we all, led by the scientific community, have been inclined to laud as understanding falls short of deserving such high praise, despite perhaps constituting significant advances in the pursuit of scientific truth. Achieving scientific understanding is hard after all. Here it might be helpful to invoke Roberts and Woods' distinction between having *understanding* and having *an understanding*.[13] Although it might be right to say that a theorist has *an* understanding of some subject matter in the sense that he has a more or less internally consistent, comprehensive, and complex belief-set about the subject matter (an impressive intellectual accomplishment, to be sure), if his beliefs about the subject matter are false he lacks understanding proper. It might also be that improvements in scientific theory can advance factive understanding of certain natural phenomena, despite the theories themselves being too far from the truth to ground attributions of understanding of that which they purport to explain.

1.3 Understanding and Epistemic Luck

The claim at the end of the previous section, i.e., that one might come to understand some phenomena by way of reasoning through a false set of beliefs or theory,

[13] Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 43-4.

has been rejected by some who take understanding, like knowledge, to be vulnerable to the kind of epistemic luck present in Gettier-style cases. Stephen Grimm has, for example, argued that understanding is a species of knowledge and, as such, is undermined by all and only those kinds of epistemic luck that undermine knowledge.[14] Duncan Pritchard has argued that understanding, unlike justified true belief, is always a valuable cognitive achievement and is undermined only by the kinds of epistemic luck that preclude justified true belief from the status of cognitive achievement.[15] He distinguishes what he calls "Gettier-style" epistemic luck in which "something intervenes 'betwixt' belief and fact" and "environmental" epistemic luck of the sort present in Goldman's famous barn façade case.[16] Pritchard claims that understanding is undermined by the former kind of epistemic luck, but not the latter. For the sake of moving forward with our discussion of the role of emotion in the value of understanding, I will not here attempt a lengthy rebuttal of either Grimm or Pritchard. I will, however, briefly suggest some reasons to think they are both mistaken.

After considering a couple of cases purported to show that understanding is at least sometimes undermined by knowledge-undermining epistemic luck—in his words, "etiology can matter a great deal to understanding"[17]—Grimm considers Kvanvig's

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[14] Stephen Grimm, "Is Understanding a Species of Knowledge?," *British Journal of the Philosophy of Science,* 57 (2006): 515-35.

[15] "Knowledge, Understanding and Epistemic Value," in A. O'Hear, ed., *Epistemology: Volume 64, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[16] Alvin Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* 73, no. 20 (1976): 771-91.

[17] Grimm, "Is Understanding a Species of Knowledge?," 522.

"Comanche" case involving supposed understanding of the Comanche dominance of the southern plains derived through an unreliable source.[18] Grimm suggests a version of the case in which the author of the Native American history textbook arrives at accurate explanations through a highly unreliable process (e.g., a crystal ball, or Ouija Board). He then argues, and Pritchard, who appeals to the same case, agrees, that understanding cannot be gained by reading the textbook since understanding, like knowledge, cannot be gained through a bad source of information.

This seems clearly false. Understanding, after all, is primarily a grasping of connections concerning some object or among some (more or less complex) body of information. Having studied a shoddily researched, but impeccably accurate and (accidentally) insightful textbook is certainly a legitimate way to acquire such understanding. Indeed, the primary mark of understanding is not the causal history of one's cognitive states, but rather the explanatory insightfulness or tight cohesion of one's (accurate) grasp of a subject matter as evidenced by the facility with which one accurately can explain the material to others, answer unexpected questions about the information, and incorporate unforeseen phenomena (or unexpected data) into one's coherent grasp of the information.

We might think with John Locke that the most valuable kind of understanding is not likely to be gained simply through believing on testimony (of a textbook, or any other source), but will also involve some additional reflection and insight gleaned from the subject's personal experience, prior education, reasoning, and so on, as well as some

[18] Grimm, "Is Understanding a Species of Knowledge?," 522f; cf. Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, 197-200).

first-person appreciation of the connections imbedded in the information.[19] Setting aside that complication, in whatever way one can come to understand through reading a textbook, understanding seems no less available when the textbook was produced in an unreliable way than when it was produced in ideal scholarly fashion. I thus maintain, *pace* Grimm and Pritchard, that understanding is not undermined by the kind of knowledge-undermining epistemic luck present in the Comanche case, even if understanding is undermined by some types of epistemic luck.

1.4 The Transparency of Understanding

That understanding is immune to some knowledge-undermining epistemic luck renders understanding more consciously transparent than knowledge, since the presence of such luck is rarely internally accessible. Of course, that understanding is factive renders it less than fully transparent. One might take oneself to understand when, in fact, one fails to understand either because one's relevant beliefs are false or because the relevant body of information is incoherent in ways of which one is unaware.

Even Linda Zagzebski, who rejects the facticity of understanding outright, claiming that the criteria for understanding are entirely internal, acknowledges that "It

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[19] Locke writes, "For, I think, we may as rationally hope to see with other Mens Eyes, as to know by other Mens Understandings. So much as we our selves consider and comprehend of Truth and Reason, so much we possess of real and true Knowledge. The floating of other Mens Opinions in our brains makes us not one jot more knowing, though they happen to be true. What in them was Science, is in us by Opiniatrety, whilst we give up our Assent only to reverend Names, and do not, as they did, employ our Reason to *understand* those *Truths*, which gave them reputation" (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Peter Nidditch, ed., [New York: Oxford University Press, 1975], I, iv, 23, p. 101). Cf. Richard Foley's discussion of Locke on the epistemic authority of testimony, (*Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 89-92).

may seem to me that I clearly understand something even when I do not."[20] For Zagzebski, this simply amounts to the claim that we are not always good judges of whether we have met the internal criteria for understanding. Interestingly, though Zagzebski argues that while we may sometimes take ourselves to understand when we do not, whenever we have understanding we take ourselves to have it. Zagzebski thus defends a UU-principle of understanding analogous to the KK-principle of knowledge. As she puts it, "It may be possible to know without knowing that one knows, but it is impossible to understand without understanding that one understands."[21] That the UU-principle is false is obvious, however, when one considers that one must have the concept of understanding to understanding that one understands. It is surely possible to understand many things without having the concept of understanding. Moreover, Zagzebski herself acknowledges that we sometimes take ourselves to understand even when we do not understand. Hence, she builds in an accuracy, or truth, condition into meta-level understanding. To do so, however, is to defend the claim that meta-level understanding is factive, which then compromises her thesis that first-order understanding is non-factive. If understanding is not factive then, *ipso facto*, neither is understanding that one understands.

In rejection of Zagzebski's inconsistent stance on the facticity of understanding, I maintain that there is one important criterion for understanding that is not internally accessible – the truth or accuracy of the relevant connections and believed propositions.

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[20] Linda Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," in Matthias Steup, ed., *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 246.

[21] Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," 246.

Nevertheless, the features of understanding that set it apart from other cognitive achievements are internal and consciously transparent. Barring skeptical scenarios, it is thus much easier (and, indeed, more common) to become aware of one's own understanding than one's own knowledge. I offer further support for a weak version of the transparency thesis in section three, where I examine the relationship between the transparency and the value of understanding.

2. The Emotional Basis of Evaluative Understanding

I have already suggested in the previous two chapters some reasons for thinking that emotional experience is ordinarily involved in the formation of our evaluative concepts and that without the aid of emotional experience many of our evaluative concepts would be, at best, impoverished versions of themselves. These observations, taken together with the thesis presented above that understanding is essentially conceptual, suggest that emotional experience is necessary for the best and deepest human understanding of value. This is confirmed by the case of Temple Grandin recounted in chapter one. Here, again, is Sacks' account of his conversation with Grandin during their interview:

> As we drove into the park, the landscape opened out into an immense mountain plateau, with limitless views in every direction. We pulled off the road and gazed toward the Rockies—snowcapped, outlined against the horizon, luminously clear even though they were nearly a hundred miles away. I asked Temple if she did not feel a sense of their sublimity. 'They're pretty, yes. Sublime, I don't know.' When I pressed her, she said that she was puzzled by such words and had spent much time with a dictionary, trying to understand them. She had looked up 'sublime,' 'mysterious,' 'numinous,' and 'awe,' but they all seemed to be defined in terms of one another. 'The mountains are pretty,' she repeated, 'but they don't give me a special feeling, the feeling you seem to enjoy.' After living for three

> and a half years in Fort Collins, she said, this was only the second time she had been to them.[22]

Elsewhere in his account Sacks explains that Grandin exhibits a "poverty of emotional or aesthetic response to most visual scenes: she can describe them with great accuracy but they do not seem to correspond to or evoke any strongly felt states of mind."[23] As I noted in chapter one, Grandin's emotional deficiency seems, by her own account, to have resulted in a conceptual deficiency. Having never experienced certain emotion-types (e.g., awe) as a result of her autism, Grandin's correlative evaluative concepts (e.g., sublimity), insofar as she possesses them at all, are at best impoverished versions of those possessed by emotionally normal agents. She certainly does have a concept of sublimity, but her concept seems to refer to little more than some evaluative property she knows not what. Whereas Reid recognized that the concepts involved in normal sensory experience of secondary qualities are concepts of the unknown causes of known sensations, we might say that Grandin's evaluative concepts (at least some of them) are at best concepts of the unknown causes of unknown sensations (unknown to her, that is).[24]

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[22] Oliver Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 293.

[23] Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars*, 286.

[24] Using the smell of a rose as an example, Reid writes, "If you ask me, what is that quality or modification in a rose which I call its smell, I am at a loss to answer directly. Upon reflection I find, that I have a distinct notion of the sensation which it produces in my mind. But there can be nothing like to this sensation in the rose, because it is insentient. The quality in the rose is something which occasions the sensation in me; but what that something is, I know not. My senses give me no information upon this point. The only notion therefore my senses give is this, that smell in the rose is an unknown quality or modification, which is the cause or occasion of a sensation which I know well" (*IP* II xvii, 256; cf. *Inq*. II ii, 26).

The relevant point for our discussion here is that Grandin's emotional-conceptual deficiency seems, once again by her own testimony, to be tied to, or perhaps to constitute, a deficiency of understanding. Lacking direct emotional experience of certain evaluative properties, Grandin fails to understand the meanings of the evaluative terms that pick out those properties. We might say that she fails fully to understand the evaluative properties themselves. Indeed, while she seems to possess *a* concept of sublimity (e.g., that property others perceive when they view the snow-capped Rockies), and thus perhaps a modicum of understanding, the informational content contained in her concept is so attenuated on account of her emotional deficiency that it fails to ground anything close to full or deep understanding of sublimity. On the account of understanding presented above, her deficiency of evaluative understanding might amount to a failure to grasp the connection between the evaluative term *sublimity* and the property in the world to which that term refers. For, being unable to get herself into the state of mind by which the property of sublimity is accessed, she is unable to connect an experience with the term. Perhaps, though, her failure to understand sublimity is not primarily a failure to understand a term, but rather a failure to understand the property itself, due to her lack of experiential acquaintance with the property. Either way, the point remains that Grandin's diminished evaluative understanding is a direct result of her emotional deficiency.

It is not obvious that experiential acquaintance with the properties in question would add any new propositional content to Grandin's understanding, at least where the addition of propositional content is understood to involve the formation of beliefs involving new concepts and, hence, new propositions. Even without experiential acquaintance with the properties, Grandin might have come to believe (and perhaps even

to know) on the basis of testimony a very large number of true propositions about sublimity and normal (emotional) human experience thereof. Setting aside the question whether emotional experience necessarily contributes new propositional content to the understanding, what is apparent is that were Grandin to have an emotional experience of sublimity, this experiential acquaintance would enhance the propositional content constitutive of her understanding by significantly enriching the concepts involved. In fact, in the absence of an experientially-informed concept of sublimity, even a comprehensive set of true testimonial beliefs (or propositional knowledge) about sublimity would fall far short of the understanding of sublimity enjoyed by one who has a similar set of beliefs about sublimity, but whose concept of sublimity is informed by direct emotional experience of the property.

Compare the following analogous case concerning understanding of sensible properties suggested by Frank Jackson's famous Knowledge Argument for the existence of non-physical qualia.[25] Mary is a scientist who is confined to a black and white room and is educated through reading black and white books and by watching lectures on a black and white television. She knows every physical fact there is to know about visual experiences of color (not her own, of course, for she has had none, but rather those of others). Jackson observes that when Mary is let out of the room or presented with colorful objects she learns something new about the world, say, what visual experience of red is like. Jackson takes this to be evidence that physicalism is false, where physicalism

[25] See Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia," *Philosophical Quarterly*, 32 (1982): 127-36, and "What Mary Didn't Know," *Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 291-5.

is the view that the physical world is all there is and, hence, complete physical knowledge is complete knowledge.

The relevance of Jackson's thought experiment to our present discussion is that, regardless of whether Mary acquires new knowledge of the sort that shows physicalism to be false, it seems undeniable that her understanding of visual experiences of color and of colors (e.g., red) is deepened by her experience. While still confined in the room, Mary could, of course, accurately answer many questions about the physical nature of color and the physical mechanisms in the eye and the brain that contribute to our visual experiences of color. It would be incorrect, therefore, to claim that she had no understanding of such experiences. In fact, we might think that her understanding of visual experiences of color is in some sense significantly better, even while confined to the room, than that of some normal (unconfined) percipient beings. Yet, despite the comprehensiveness and coherence of her beliefs about redness and her impressive ability correctly to answer questions about redness, Mary's understanding is significantly impoverished. Having never had a visual experience of redness, her understanding of redness at best amounts to understanding of a property that, given certain physical conditions, causes within human perceivers some experience that is totally foreign to her. Upon seeing red for the first time, we might imagine Mary exclaiming, "Oh, now I understand what red is."

Of course, one might think that Mary could have had some experiential understanding of color perception on the basis of her own visual experiences of black and white and the variety of shades of each that she experienced while in the room. To make the case more convincing we can stipulate that Mary had no visual experiences prior to

her first visual experience of red, either because her room was completely dark or because she was blind. Likewise, we might think that some analogical understanding of an evaluative property is possible even in the absence of an emotional experience that directly suggests the relevant concept to our minds, as long as the agent has had some related emotional experience (or some emotional experience involving a related concept). Indeed, the fact that Grandin is arguably in such a position, as evidenced by the range of emotions she displays toward situations involving her family, the animals for which she advocates humane treatment, etc., reveals that it is probably appropriate to attribute some understanding of sublimity to her. She at least understands what emotional experience is like and how positive emotions differ phenomenally from negative emotions. Hence, to appreciate the force of the thesis that emotional experience is necessary for deep or rich human understanding of value, we must consider a case of one whose evaluative concepts are informed by no emotional experience at all. Like Mary the blind scientist, it is difficult to imagine how a person with no emotional experience at all might have anything but a very attenuated understanding of sublimity, danger, injustice, generosity, beauty, etc.

It might seem at this point that the Mary the scientist example reveals a unique parallel between emotional experience and sensory experience of secondary qualities and one might be tempted to conclude on that basis that the evaluative properties experienced through emotions are just a special subclass of secondary qualities. To see that the formation of evaluative concepts through emotional experience similarly parallels the formation of concepts for primary qualities through sensory experience and, hence, that the example above does not reveal any unique similarity between evaluative properties

and secondary qualities, we need only consider a case similar to the case of Mary the scientist, but in which the property Mary is unacquainted with is a primary quality. Imagine that Mary was born with severe nerve damage that rendered her completely unable to experience tactile sensations, but nevertheless left intact her essential brain function and some sensory capacity necessary for learning (e.g., vision and hearing). Despite her condition, Mary managed to survive into adulthood and along the way became very well educated about the human nervous system, the physical events involved in normal human tactile experience, and about the physical properties of objects related to and constitutive of hardness, figure, and spatial extension. Then, one wonderful day, Mary was instantaneously healed of her nerve damage and for the first time had a tactile perception of a hard object.

While it might be true in one sense that Mary had concepts of hardness, figure, and spatial extension prior to her initial tactile experience, by virtue of hearing the words and associating them with properties of material objects experienced by others through touch, her concepts would have been at best concepts of some mysterious properties that are related to other mysterious properties in a variety of ways. Hence, even if there were no true proposition involving the terms 'hardness,' 'figure,' or 'extension,' that Mary did not know, her understanding of the correlative concepts prior to her cure would have been terribly impoverished. Reid actually suggests that absent tactile perceptual experience, it is impossible for humans to form these concepts in the first place: "It is further to be observed, that hardness and softness, roughness and smoothness, figure and motion, do all suppose extension, and cannot be conceived without it; yet I think it must, on the other hand, be allowed, that if we had never felt any thing hard or soft, rough or

smooth, figured or moved, we should never have had a conception of extension."[26] Indeed, absent tactile perceptual experience it is difficult to imagine how Mary might have even visually perceived the three-dimensionality of objects prior to her cure. Having never felt a material object by touching it, why should she not see the world as a two-dimensional plane, where all movement appeared nothing more than shifting of colors and shadows?

These considerations suggest that it is at least initially plausible that absent all direct experience of the properties in question Mary's knowledge and, indeed, her beliefs would not succeed in connecting with the properties themselves in the way necessary for knowledge. Rather than saying that Mary has knowledge or even beliefs of or about the properties in question, therefore, it might be better to say that her beliefs and her knowledge are of or about the terms used (by others) to refer to those properties. It might seem, then, that Mary's complete lack of understanding of hardness, extension, or redness renders her unable to know or even to believe anything about these properties (as opposed to the terms in her language that others use to refer to the properties). This suggestion that understanding as acquaintance might be necessary for at least some kinds of knowledge thus complements Roberts and Wood's suggestion that understanding as synthetic ordering or sense-making is necessary for every instance of knowledge.[27] Even

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[26] *Inq*., 62.

[27] Roberts and Wood argue that that to know even the simplest proposition presupposes a synthetic power; that is, the ability to bring together things in a perceptual array, or concepts belonging to some kind of syntactic structure, into a sense-making order. Such perceptual/conceptual organization or sense making, they argue, just is understanding; therefore, "you can't very well know a proposition without understanding it," for, "Understanding…is a good that pervades knowledge from bottom to top" (*Intellectual Virtues*, 48-49). Compare Gilbert Ryle's influential argument that knowing-

if the example under discussion here does not support this strong conclusion, it is nevertheless clear that Mary's tactile perceptions either cause the formation of new concepts in Mary or they greatly enhance and enrich the concepts Mary already had in such a way as to deepen her understanding (if not her knowledge as well) of the perceived properties and the objects in which they inhere.

The above cases reveal that just as sense perception is necessary for the best and deepest human understanding of sensible qualities (both primary and secondary), so too emotional experience is necessary for the best and deepest human understanding of the value and disvalue in the world. This is yet another significant parallel between emotion and sense perception that further confirms the perceptual thesis of emotion.

Against the perceptual thesis of emotion, however, John Deigh has recently argued that there is a significant disanalogy between the way in which we come to understand the sensory properties of material objects and the way in which we come to understand the evaluative properties of the situational objects of emotional experience.[28] After arguing that emotions cannot involve concepts since such concepts would either be innate or learned through experience and, he argues, there are good reasons to reject both of these possibilities,[29] Deigh suggests that it might be possible to rescue the perceptual

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how, which seems to amount to a kind of understanding in Ryle's examples, is a necessary condition for knowing-that ("Knowing How and Knowing That," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 46 [*1946]: 1-16).

[28] John Deigh, "Concepts of Emotions in Modern Philosophy and Psychology," in Peter Goldie, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 30-2.

[29] Deigh's arguments against both innate and acquired accounts of perceptual concepts are not clear and it would be a digression to attempt to clarify them here. Moreover, in chapter one I defended a perceptual account of emotions of the sort Deigh

thesis of emotion by showing that emotional experiences are akin to perceptual experiences that involve no application of concepts.[30] Deigh argues that while some perceptual experiences, e.g., seeing an extended hand as an offer of friendship, involve interpretation and, hence, the application of concepts, other perceptual experiences, e.g., seeing a straight stick as bent when it is partially submerged in water, do not. He argues that the apparent bentness of the stick in water, like other "sensory properties" such as yellowness and sweetness, are properties "of a kind of which we are directly aware through one or more of our sense modalities."[31] Deigh argues that the only way to rescue the perceptual thesis of emotion is to show that evaluative properties such as dangerousness are parallel to such sensory properties. He takes it to be a decisive refutation of such a parallel that we do not teach children the meaning of the word 'dangerous' in the same way that we teach them the meanings of the words 'yellow' or 'sweet.'[32]

I reject Deigh's distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual perceptual states, along with his claim that a successful defense of the perceptual thesis of emotion must show emotions to be akin to non-conceptual sense perceptual states. Nevertheless,

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rejects and I take it that my discussion in that chapter is sufficient as a general reply to Deigh on this point.

[30] Of course, in allowing for the possibility of non-conceptual perceptual experience, Deigh rejects propositionalism about perception.

[31] Deigh, "Concepts of Emotions in Modern Philosophy and Psychology," 30.

[32] Deigh writes, "The question, then, is whether being dangerous is similarly a sensory property of objects, whether it is a property of the kind of which we are directly aware through one of our sense modalities. If it were, then we would teach children what the word 'dangerous' meant in the same way that we teach them the meaning of the words for sensory properties like 'yellow' and 'sweet'" ("Concepts of Emotion in Modern Philosophy and Psychology," 30).

if it can be shown that the way we come to understand, i.e., minimally to gain and develop concepts for, the evaluative properties relevant to emotional experience (or, alternatively, the way that we come to learn the meanings of the terms for those properties) differs significantly from the way we come to understand the properties relevant to sense perceptual experience, this would threaten the thesis I have been defending in this chapter, namely, that emotions function with respect to our evaluative understanding in a way parallel, if not equivalent, to the way sense perceptions function with respect to our understanding of the sensible realm.

Deigh's argument is, however, unconvincing. He contends that when we teach children the meaning of terms for "sensory properties" like yellowness we assume that children can recognize similarity between various yellow objects prior to their learning the meaning of the term. In other words, we assume that children have acquaintance with the property yellow before they learn a word that picks out the property. According to Deigh, we do not assume any such prior acquaintance with evaluative properties when we teach children the meaning of evaluative terms like 'dangerous.' Here I quote him at length:

> one does not assume that children can recognize, prior to their learning the meaning of the word 'dangerous', similarity among objects all of which are dangerous. Otherwise one would naturally teach them what the word means by teaching them to apply the word to what they already recognize as the property the objects have in common. Rather children are taught the meaning of the word by being told which things are dangerous and which are not. Teaching them the meaning and teaching them how to recognize the property are therefore one and the same. One assumes, that is, that the child is ignorant of which things have the property and which do not, that it cannot, without instruction, recognize a thing's being or not being dangerous. Whether it's strangers or matches or busy streets, a child is taught about the danger each poses, and the teaching typically includes some explanation of the harm that each can cause. Likewise, one teaches a child not to be afraid of things that initially frighten it when they are not dangerous. In so doing, one is not correcting a child's misperception of danger. Rather, one is

> teaching the child that not everything scary is dangerous, and this teaching too may include a demonstration that these scary things do not cause harm. If being dangerous were a sensory property, such teaching would be unnecessary for getting children to recognize danger. A method of teaching like that of teaching children the meaning of color words would be sufficient.[33]

Exactly how the two processes of semantic education Deigh identifies are supposed to differ is not entirely clear. After all, he admits that the way we teach the meaning of color words is by telling children which items in front of them have the property picked out by the word. Similarly, when we teach children the meaning of the term 'dangerous' we tell them which objects (or situations) are dangerous. Of course, as Deigh suggests, simply presenting children who have no prior understanding of dangerousness with a variety of dangerous situations and telling them that they are all dangerous will not be sufficient to teach them the meaning of the term 'dangerous,' especially if the situations have other salient properties in common. So, for instance, if a young child were presented with video clips of the following situations – a child playing in the street, a child playing with matches, and a child playing with knives – and told that each of these situations was dangerous and nothing more, the child might conclude that dangerousness has to do with potential harm, or she might just as reasonably conclude that dangerousness is akin to playfulness. What Deigh fails to acknowledge, however, is that the same goes for teaching the meaning of color terms and other terms for so-called sensory properties. Were an adult to present a banana, a lemon, and a pineapple ring to a young child with no prior understanding of yellowness and tell her that they are all yellow, the child might judge that the term 'yellow' refers to the color of the objects, or she might just as reasonably judge that 'yellow' refers to the property of belonging to a

[33] Deigh, "Concepts of Emotion in Modern Philosophy and Psychology," 31.

general kind of food (say, fruit). Or, consider the confusion that would follow from a parent trying to teach her young child with no understanding of shape, size, or color terms the meaning of 'yellow' by presenting her child with three yellow squares of the same size and telling her that they are all yellow (especially if the shades of yellow differed). It is because of the desire to avoid such confusion that children are typically taught color words by presenting them with groups of similarly colored objects that vary in size, shape, etc.; this helps to ensure that the most salient similar feature of the objects is their color.

Of course, young children (and adults for that matter) are generally more reliable at perceptually identifying the color of medium-sized objects than they are at identifying the evaluative features of value-laden situations. This seems to be the observation behind Deigh's discussion of the way we teach children that not everything scary is dangerous. Indeed, the presence of (real) danger is not as obvious to most people as the presence of yellow is. Perhaps, then, the relevant dissimilarity between so-called sensory properties of which Deigh thinks we are directly aware in perception and evaluative properties (of which we are not directly aware, according to Deigh) has to do with the level of training necessary to develop a reliable sensitivity to the presence of such properties. This dissimilarity does not entail, however, that the way we come to understand the sensible properties of material objects is relevantly dissimilar from the way we come to understand the evaluative properties of the situational objects of emotion (relevant to the question of whether emotions are perceptual, that is).

To see this, let us consider Deigh's example of teaching children the meaning of the term 'dangerous.' When we teach children the meaning of 'dangerous,' while we

might not assume that they have a prior ability to recognize dangerousness with much consistency (assuming 'recognize' is a success term), we do assume that they have prior experiences with dangerousness. Moreover, our methods of teaching children the meaning of 'dangerous' suggest that we implicitly assume that children's prior experiences of dangerousness occurred through past experiences of fear. As Deigh himself points out, we teach children the meaning of 'dangerous' by somehow appealing to their experiences of fear. Indeed, while we describe the potential harm of dangerous situations to children in order to teach them the meaning of 'dangerous,' the primary reason we attempt to highlight the potential harmfulness of dangerous situations is to encourage children to be appropriately fearful of them. We then rely on the fact that the dangerousness of the situation is its most salient feature to the fearful child in order to teach the child the meaning of 'dangerous.' This is similar to showing a child three yellow squares of the same size, instructing the child not to focus on the shape or size of the objects and then explaining that the other feature the squares have in common is yellowness.

To get at this point another way, imagine trying to teach the meaning of 'dangerous' to a child who had no capacity for fear. No amount of describing the potential harmfulness of dangerous situations would be sufficient to make the dangerousness of the situations their most salient feature to the fearless child. We could very well teach children the meaning of 'dangerous' by describing several situations that are so frightening to the children that the apparent danger of such situations is the most salient feature of those situations to them, even if such situations were not objectively dangerous. In so doing, however, we would be reinforcing inapt and perhaps even

psychologically unhealthy fears. Compare teaching children the meaning of 'yellow' by identifying as yellow a group of white objects while in a yellow-lit room, without offering any explanation of the abnormal lighting conditions. The children would learn the meaning of 'yellow' all right, but at the cost of the formation of some false beliefs, such as that the milk, marshmallows, and white walls in the room are yellow.

The fact that we recognize that children's experiences of fear are not infallible (and perhaps quite unreliable) indications of objective danger does not mean that we assume their fears are not experiences of situational objects as dangerous. Deigh fails to appreciate the significance of this point. On the one hand, he acknowledges that we teach children not to be afraid of non-dangerous things that initially frighten them, but on the other hand he claims that this is not correcting misperceptions of danger, but rather teaching them that "not everything scary is dangerous." In teaching children not to be afraid of non-dangerous situations we are attempting to develop within them a disposition to respond with fear to situations that are actually (as opposed to merely apparently) dangerous. But this practice relies on the assumption that everything scary *is* dangerous, that is, if we understand scary to mean something like objectively fear-worthy as opposed to merely fear-inducing. In other words, we assume that fear is a response to perceived danger and we attempt to correct children's misperceptions of danger by directing their fears toward that which is objectively and not merely apparently dangerous. Likewise, as children become more sophisticated color-perceivers, we might teach them that not everything that seems yellow is yellow, such as white walls or milk in a yellow-lit room. The fact that we do not have a phenomenological term analogous to 'scary' or 'frightening' that picks out the property of *seeming yellow* might suggest that the

properties yellowness and dangerousness are dissimilar in a way that renders experiences of the former but not the latter kind of property properly perceptual, but this just shows that the contingent features of our natural language can be conceptually misleading.

One might object on behalf of Deigh that the above considerations of the way we come to understand the meaning of evaluative terms imply that our evaluative experiences involve the employment of concepts and that Deigh only took his argument about the way we teach the meaning of these terms to children to show that emotional experience cannot be non-conceptual. I am, of course, happy to concede that emotions are conceptual since I have already argued in chapter one that all perception is propositional and, hence, conceptual. It is sufficient for my present purposes to show that Deigh's discussion of the way children come to learn the meanings of evaluative terms does not undermine the thesis that emotional experience functions with respect to evaluative understanding in a way parallel if not equivalent to the way sense perception functions with respect to understanding of the sensible world.

3. Emotion and the Value of Understanding

Having shown that the relationship between emotional experience and evaluative understanding parallels that between sensory experience and understanding of the physical world, I shall now move on to a discussion of the importance of emotional perception for our awareness and appreciation of the value of understanding. Rather than providing further evidence in favor of the perceptual thesis here, I shall show that in conjunction with the transparency of understanding thesis introduced above, the perceptual thesis of emotion provides a plausible explanation of our awareness and appreciation of the value of understanding.

Near the end of his discussion of the distinctive value of understanding, Kvanvig suggests some ways in which a particular sort of epistemically valuable understanding is also pragmatically valuable. He writes,

> to have mastered such explanatory relationships is valuable not only because it involves the finding of new truths but also because finding such relationships organizes and systematizes our thinking on a subject matter in a way beyond the mere addition of more true beliefs or even justified true beliefs. Such organization is pragmatically useful because it allows us to reason from one bit of information to other related information that is useful as a basis for action, where unorganized thinking provides no such basis for inference. Moreover, such organized elements of thought provide *intrinsically satisfying closure* to the process of inquiry, yielding a sense or *feeling of completeness* to our grasp of a particular subject matter.[34]

Kvanvig's comments in the passage quoted above seem to imply a version of the transparency thesis according to which the presence of understanding is, in some important sense, internally accessible; that is, at least in normal circumstances. For, as Kvanvig argues, understanding is pragmatically valuable in part because it provides for satisfying closure of inquiry as a result of being regularly accompanied by an internally accessible sense or feeling that we have achieved the goal of inquiry. In more recent writing, however, Kvanvig has rejected Zagzebski's strong transparency thesis, grounded as it is in her view that understanding is not factive. He writes, "deception is always possible to the extent that understanding is factive or quasi-factive, as I've defended. Thus, it is possible to gather a body of information that looks from the inside just like understanding, but in fact is not."[35] Kvanvig thus holds a weak version of the transparency thesis, according to which we often, if not typically, can become aware of

[34] Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, 202 (italics added).

[35] Kvanvig, "Curiosity and the Response-Dependent Special Value of Understanding" (unpublished manuscript).

our own understanding when we have it, though we do sometimes take ourselves to understand when we in fact do not.

Something like the weak version of the transparency thesis implicit in Kvanvig's analysis seems right, as I argued above. Even Pritchard, who flatly rejects what he understands to be the transparency thesis and thinks that understanding is undermined by some types of epistemic luck, agrees that "it is hard to make sense of how an agent could possess understanding and yet lack good reflectively accessible grounds in support of that understanding. Understanding cannot be 'opaque' to the subject in the way that knowledge, by externalist lights at least, can sometimes be."[36] Those, like me, who do not share Pritchard's conviction that understanding can be undermined by epistemic luck have even less reason to resist the claim that understanding is (weakly) transparent.

Given that understanding is (weakly) transparent, might its value also be (weakly) transparent? To answer this question, we must first get clear on just what kind of value understanding might possess. As we saw above, Kvanvig has argued that understanding is pragmatically valuable in a way that is relevant to the intellectual life. Might understanding also be intrinsically valuable? In recent work, Kvanvig has expressed pessimism about our ability to prove of any object that it is intrinsically valuable. He nevertheless thinks it can be shown that "understanding is more valuable from a purely cognitive or intellectual point of view than [sic] knowledge,"[37] where the value in view is neither intrinsic nor merely instrumental. Employing a distinction introduced into the literature by Christine Korsgaard, Kvanvig posits a kind of value – final value – that

[36] Pritchard, "Knowledge, Understanding and Epistemic Value."

[37] Kvanvig, "Curiosity and the Response-Dependent Special Value of Understanding."

objects have when they are valuable for their own sake, even if their value is based on extrinsic features. Kvanvig argues that understanding has more final value than knowledge; that is, we value understanding for its own sake more than we do knowledge. He argues that curiosity is the primary motivating force that drives cognitive inquiry and that curiosity is most fundamentally aimed at understanding, not knowledge, as evidenced by the fact that we often remain curious about some object or phenomenon, even after we have achieved knowledge (but not understanding) of it. Hence, it is the achievement of understanding and not the achievement of knowledge that sates curiosity.[38]

We are now in a position to see the important role that emotion plays in making the value of understanding epistemically accessible to us and what this has to do with the transparency of understanding. Recall Kvanvig's claim that understanding yields "a sense or feeling of completeness to our grasp of a particular subject matter." Though Kvanvig did not intend for his phrase "feeling of completeness" to suggest an important role for emotion in perceiving some objective value of understanding, the connotation is nevertheless appropriate. As a result of its largely internal nature, the cognitive state of understanding is generally accessible to those who achieve it (this is the weak transparency thesis). Given the prevalence of the deep and abiding human concern for understanding (roughly, curiosity), awareness of the achievement of understanding often involves recognition or construal of understanding as the valuable *telos* of cognitive inquiry. Hence, the feeling of understanding is inherently emotional. To feel as if one

[38] Kvanvig, "Curiosity and the Response-Dependent Special Value of Understanding."

understands is to construe one's own cognitive state(s) as bearing positively on the concerns or desires motivating inquiry (i.e., curiosity). As Kvanvig has argued, this satisfying emotional feeling is pragmatically valuable in that it often provides for satisfying closure of inquiry. When we experience the feeling (i.e., the emotion) of understanding, our inquiry-motivating concern – curiosity – is sated and we are then able to investigate other matters undistracted by emotions of frustration, puzzlement, and disappointment that often accompany failure to understand matters of importance.[39]

As a result of the intimate correlation between *reflective* awareness of understanding and *affective* awareness of understanding (i.e., we rarely, if ever, come to be aware of our own understanding without experiencing the positive affect associated with understanding), it is tempting to equate understanding with its distinctive feel.[40] This is especially so when one focuses on the value of understanding. For it is tempting to infer from the fact that understanding is valuable that the positive affective feeling of understanding, which inevitably accompanies awareness of it, is constitutive of the epistemic good. To do so, however, is to mistake a positive emotion or feeling for the positive state of affairs at which that emotion or feeling is directed. We do not, after all, think that the valuable end of parenting is the satisfaction that inevitably accompanies watching one's children lead flourishing lives. Nozick's "experience machine" thought

[39] Of course, these emotions are not just distractions from inquiry, but serve to guide inquiry and measure its current degree of success. In this way, these emotions are elements of virtuous epistemic engagement or activity. I say that they distract us in the sense that they tend to focus our attention on one line of (incomplete) inquiry, making it difficult for us to leave that issue behind and focus on something else.

[40] See Roberts and Wood (*Intellectual Virtues*, 48-9) for a helpful discussion of this issue.

experiment compellingly reveals the error of such conflation.[41] In fact, even to incorporate the resultant positive emotion as a significant motivating constituent of the goal of parenting seems to pervert the activity.

There may be some activities, such as sexual intercourse, watching movies, listening to music, taking drugs, etc., at least one natural end of which is a positive emotional experience, but these activities, when engaged in solely for the sake of a positive affective experience, do not seem to contribute to a well-lived life (it is, indeed, the potential for abusive self-indulgence through such activities that explains, in part, the stereotypical aversion of many conservative religious groups to "drugs, sex, and rock and roll"). Whatever we say about the value of such activities, achieving understanding is central to a well-lived life, given that humans are essentially curious rational animals. We must be careful, therefore, to distinguish understanding from its distinctive feel, especially in light of the fact that *reflective* and *affective* awareness of understanding rarely, if ever, come apart.

While it is a mistake to equate the feeling of understanding (i.e., the emotion of satisfaction that we experience when our curiosity is sated) with understanding itself, the feeling of understanding is, nevertheless, a valuable source of information about understanding. Specifically, it is primarily through the feeling of understanding that the value of understanding is experienced by curious humans. Through the positive feeling of understanding and the satisfaction it provides in closure of inquiry, curious agents can come to see that understanding is a valuable cognitive state, valuable for its own sake.

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[41] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Malden, MA: Basic Books, 1974) 42-45.

The relief, joy, and elation humans often, and perhaps typically, experience when having finally come to understand some body of information – i.e., the emotions we often express with the exclamation "Aha!" – reveals not only that we highly value understanding for its own sake, but that understanding is valuable for its own sake. Even in cases in which the subject matter is less important to us, the mild intellectual satisfaction we experience upon coming to understand reveals the value of understanding.

That curiosity is a widely shared human concern for understanding is a good *prima facie* reason to think that understanding is valuable, assuming that we have no overriding reason to think otherwise. Moreover, given the perceptual and justificatory theses of emotion defended in this dissertation, simple emotional perceptual awareness of the value of understanding is sufficient in many cases to provide non-inferential justification for the corresponding belief that understanding is valuable, even absent any considerations of how widespread and important for human cognitive inquiry the concern for understanding is. Hence, whether inferentially or non-inferentially, it is the feel (i.e., the affective awareness) of understanding as enabled by the (weak) transparency of understanding that ultimately grounds our awareness and appreciation of the value of understanding.

Of course, nothing argued here commits me to the view that the only valuable instances of understanding are those reflective awareness of which elicits (positive) affective awareness. Just as there are things we do not want to know, so too there are things that we do not want to understand for reasons of practical utility, psychological

health, and so on.[42] The epistemic value of understanding can surely be swamped by competing (non-epistemic) disvalue, thus leading us to have emotions of disgust or indignation or fear in response to some instances of understanding, but here it is the putrid or unjust or dangerous object understood, as opposed to the circumstance of our understanding that object, toward which these emotions are directed. My claim, appropriately qualified, is thus that the primary source of our experiential awareness and appreciation of the epistemic value of understanding is our positive emotional perception of its value, where its value is not overridden by competing disvalue.

4. Conclusion

In support of the perceptual thesis of emotion, I have shown that emotional experience is a necessary basis for the best and deepest human understanding of value, just as perceptual experience is a necessary basis for the best and deepest human understanding of the physical world. I have also argued that, given the weak transparency thesis of understanding, the perceptual thesis of emotion provides a plausible explanation for our awareness and appreciation of the special epistemic value of understanding. It is, indeed, through the positive emotional experience that accompanies the satisfaction of curiosity when we achieve understanding, that we most directly experience the value of understanding. Apart from the perceptual thesis of emotion, the fact that understanding sates curiosity and is thus an important (if not the only fundamental) aim of inquiry shows at most that we value understanding for its own sake, not that understanding is valuable for its own sake. The perceptual thesis of emotion,

[42] As Kvanvig puts it, "there are interfering factors that mask curiosity about certain things" ("Curiosity and the Response-Dependent Special Value of Understanding").

together with the justificatory thesis of emotion defended in chapter two, thus provides an explanation of how it is that the positive emotional experience that follows upon the achievement of understanding (and, hence, the satisfaction of curiosity), actually puts us in touch or acquaints us with the special value of understanding.

CHAPTER FOUR

Emotion and Wisdom

In chapters two and three I argued that emotions parallel sense perceptions by functioning as the source of at least some of our justified evaluative beliefs and by contributing in important ways to our understanding of value and disvalue, both moral and otherwise. These observations, taken together with the other structural and functional parallels between emotions and sense perceptions highlighted in chapter one, serve as strong evidence in favor of the perceptual thesis of emotion. In this fourth and final chapter I shall argue that emotions, as evaluative perceptual states, are essentially involved in our attainment and manifestation of yet another and, according to many throughout the history of philosophy, a higher epistemic good – wisdom. As a source of justified beliefs and understanding, especially of the physical world, sense perception is helpful, perhaps even essential given our constitution, for the enjoyment and employment of wisdom. Sense perception does not seem, however, to function in any additional, special way with respect to wisdom (i.e., beyond its function as a source of justified beliefs and understanding). Since we have already considered the parallels between emotion and sense perception relevant to our achievement of justified beliefs and understanding, I shall not examine them any further here. I shall rather explore the unique ways in which emotions as evaluative perceptual states can contribute to our attainment and exercise of wisdom.

1. The Emotional Beginning of Wisdom

In *Metaphysics* A.1, Aristotle writes, "all men suppose what is called wisdom (*sophia*) to deal with the first causes and the principles of things."[1] Then in *Metaphysics* A.2 he identifies philosophy as the discipline (or 'science') concerned with the pursuit of wisdom and remarks that "it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize."[2] Alternatively, the Hebrew Psalmist suggests that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10).[3] While these two authors and the traditions they represent may seem to offer competing accounts of the beginnings of human wisdom or the quest thereof, it is worth noting that they both suggest an important relationship between emotional experience and wisdom. While Aristotle posits the beginning of our pursuit of wisdom in the emotion of wonder, the Psalmist focuses on the relationship between wisdom and the emotion of fear as directed in some way toward God. It is thus appropriate to begin our exploration of the relationship between emotion and wisdom with some reflections on the emotional 'beginning' of wisdom.

1.1 Wonder

Paul Griffiths has recently argued that wonder is delighted astonishment at the appearance of some object and that wonder issues in a desire to delve deeper into one's intimate knowledge or understanding of the object. He writes, "to wonder means to feel

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[1] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, W.D. Ross, trans., in Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle Vol. 2*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), A. 1, 981b28, 1553.

[2] *Metaphysics* A.2, 982b12-13, 1554.

[3] All scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

and show delighted astonishment in response to something-or-other. This is a complex response which can usefully be distinguished into kinds, each of which prompts in those who undergo it a desire to know more, which is to say one species or another of the appetite for knowledge."[4] Griffiths distinguishes three kinds of wonder – *metaphysical wonder*, *self wonder*, and "delighted astonishment at the fact and nature of particular creatures" or, what we might call, *scientific wonder*.[5] According to Griffiths, metaphysical wonder is that delighted astonishment babies and young children seem to experience at the discovery that there is anything in existence at all. Griffiths notes that this sort of wonder is often quelled by the exigencies of survival, though it survives in the hearts of a few adults, thereby prompting investigation into the questions of metaphysics or, as Aristotle called it, first philosophy. By contrast, self wonder is the surprise and delight that humans experience upon becoming aware of their own personal existences and their many complex powers, including the ability to wonder. St. Augustine poignantly displays such self wonder in the tenth book of his *Confessions*, where he expresses amazement at the fact that he cannot fathom the depths of his own memory and thus that his mind cannot even comprehend all that it is. Finally, scientific wonder is the delight and astonishment we experience upon coming into contact with the many myriad creatures and natural phenomena we encounter in this vast and incredibly complex yet magnificently ordered world. While Griffiths' distinctions might help us to consider the variety of objects we respond to with wonder and the corresponding intellectual pursuits

[4] Paul Griffiths, *Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 126-7.

[5] Griffiths, *Intellectual Appetite*, 127-9.

to which our wonder gives rise (e.g., metaphysics, theology, self-reflective psychology, natural science, etc.), they are all species of the same emotion type.

We can employ Roberts' concern-based construal analysis of emotions here to help us clarify the nature of wonder. Following Roberts' analysis of the closely related emotion of awe, I suggest that the concern on which wonder is typically based is the natural human love of great or excellent things (i.e., love of the good).[6] In wonder we construe some object that is before our minds – either because it is being presented to us in perception or because we simply conceive of it – as great or excellent in ways that we did not expect or are not accustomed to experiencing and that we do not fully comprehend. In short, we might say that to experience wonder at some object is to construe the object as unexpectedly great. As Griffiths puts it, we are both delighted and surprised by the object. In saying that wonder involves the construal of an object as unexpectedly great or great beyond (one's current) comprehension, I do not intend to suggest that wonder involves conscious self-reflection. That is, one might experience some object as unexpectedly good or as good in some way one does not fully understand without thinking at all about one's own expectations or understanding.[7] In other words, one need not employ the concepts *unexpected* or *beyond comprehension* in order to experience wonder. One must simply construe the object as good and one must not have been expecting it (or one must not comprehend it fully). The unexpected (or not fully comprehended) aspect of the experience nevertheless shapes the affective quality of the experience of wonder. This suggests that wonder is not only grounded on our love of

[6] Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 269.

[7] I am grateful to Bob Roberts for suggesting this point.

great things, but also on a desire to discover, learn, gain *new* understanding. In wonder, we construe unexpectedly good objects in a positive affective way because we see them as objects of potential (and potentially good) discovery or new understanding.

Wonder is, therefore, a positive construal of some object, grounded in and shaped by both a love of the good and a desire for discovery or new understanding. I emphasize that wonder is a positive emotional state in order to distinguish it from the emotion of shock we experience toward objects the disvalue of which strikes or astonishes us (i.e., which we do not expect or fully understand). By contrast, in wonder we are pleasantly astonished by the object, which we construe as somehow unexpectedly great or great beyond our immediate understanding or grasp. As Roberts points out in his treatment of awe, such greatness can take many forms – vastness, ordered complexity, beauty, moral excellence, etc. We wonder, for example, at the vastness of the solar system, the organized complexities of the human body, the beauty of a sunset, the depth of a mother's love for her child, and the mind's ability to learn. We wonder at the appearance of these various forms of greatness, not simply because they immediately appear to us as great in some way, but also because we do not fully understand or comprehend them. They are, in some sense, mysterious, hidden from view, beyond us and, thus, potential objects of discovery. Indeed, wonder is positive emotion in part because it is a response to our having made a good discovery, though a discovery that prompts a desire to learn more about the object. It is often precisely the great-making features of the object that we do not fully understand or that we find wonderfully mysterious. In wonder we enjoy a glimpse of the greatness of the object and that glimpse serves as a sign of the extent of the object's greatness which we in our initial encounter have not yet fully discovered.

Aristotle observes that wonder is closely related to another emotion – namely, puzzlement. He argues that humans originally began to engage in philosophy,

> they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters, e.g., about the phenomena of the moon and those of the sun and the stars, and about the genesis of the universe. And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant.[8]

Like wonder, the concern that gives rise to and conditions the emotion of puzzlement is the concern for understanding or knowledge that Aristotle has in mind when he writes in the first line of the *Metaphysics* that "All men by nature desire to know."[9] Indeed, it seems that Aristotle might have understood wonder and puzzlement to be two different versions of the same basic emotion type. Whereas the person who wonders experiences the object before her mind as delightfully great beyond her full comprehension, however, the person who is puzzled experiences it as less than fully understood, but not necessarily in such positive terms. One might, for example, be puzzled by a friend's unusually irresponsible behavior without construing the behavior in positive terms at all. Of course, we often use the verb 'to wonder' to identify a desire to understand that does not have a particularly positive feel and that may even be accompanied by negative feelings (e.g., I wonder whether it will rain tomorrow, I wonder why I was not offered that job, etc.). In such cases, however, it does not seem that the term 'wonder' is intended to pick out an emotion at all, but rather simply the desire to know or understand, the characteristic desire (or concern) to which wonder gives rise. Indeed, one might have no emotion about the prospects of rain, or negative emotions, such as disappointment, depression, or even anger about not having been offered a job one had expected to be offered. Despite the

[8] *Metaphysics* A.2, 982b14-18, 1554.

[9] *Metaphysics* A.1, 980a22, 1552.

fact that we use 'wonder' as a verb to refer to our (active) desire to know or understand (whether prompted by wonder, another emotion, or no emotion at all), it seems helpful in the absence of a more suitable emotion term, to reserve the term 'wonder' for the positive construal of an object as good, which gives rise to a desire to understand the object more fully. While it might not fit well with the corresponding verbal forms of wonder and puzzlement, moreover, this distinction between wonder and puzzlement in terms of positive and neutral (or negative) affect does fit well with ordinary usage of the corresponding adjectival forms of the words – 'wonderful' and 'puzzling.' Perhaps, then, we ought to understand puzzlement as a less positively-charged (we might say an affectively toned-down) cousin of wonder. It is this emotion of puzzlement, or the closely related, but perhaps more positively-charged emotion of wonder, or both, according to Aristotle, that gives rise to the search for understanding of the causes and first principles of things (i.e., wisdom).

Griffiths likewise acknowledges that the appearance of things not fully known or understood by us can give rise to puzzlement and contends that genuine wonder (i.e., delighted astonishment) typically gives rise to a positively-charged desire to be united with the object of wonder because of the perceived goodness of that which is before us and our concern to be intimately acquainted with (i.e., to know or understand) the good:

> Presence, appearance to the gaze, is at most the first degree of intimacy with what appears, and it may yield little more than puzzlement about the nature of the creature that appears. Appearances, however, are often surprisingly delightful, and when they are, they are likely to prompt desire for greater intimacy with the thing delighted in.[10]

[10] Griffiths, *Intellectual Appetite*, 126.

Setting aside for now the question whether it is wonder or puzzlement or both that motivate our search for wisdom, a picture of wisdom as a kind of knowledge or understanding of the (good) nature of the objects that inspire wonder is beginning to come into view. The emotion of wonder and the disposition to experience wonder at the appearance of that which is unexpectedly great beyond (current) comprehension is thus the beginning of wisdom in the sense that it prompts the search for deeper understanding (i.e., discovery) of the fundamental nature (or ontological explanation) of all that is good.

1.2 Fear

Let us now consider whether thinking with the Psalmist of the beginning of wisdom in the fear of the Lord might challenge or help to fill out the foregoing conception of wisdom. Roberts proposes the following 'defining proposition' for fright: "X presents an immediate and definite aversive possibility of a high degree of probability; may X or its aversive consequences be avoided right away."[11] In other words, to be afraid of some object in some situation is to see or construe that object as a threat to one's own well-being or the well-being of something (someone) else about which (whom) one is concerned. To fear the Lord, then, is to see God in some situation as a threat to one's own well-being or to the well-being of something about which one is concerned. To get clearer on the situation involving God about which the wise are appropriately fearful, it is helpful to consider the surrounding context of the Psalm:

> The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name! The fear of the LORD is the beginning of

[11] Roberts, *Emotions*, 199.

> wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever! (Psalm 111:7-10)

In light of the context, it is apparent that the fear of the Lord and the correlative wisdom the Psalmist has in mind is eminently practical and moral. The wise person fears the Lord and accordingly obeys (practices) God's law. This connection between the fear of the Lord and right living in obedience to God's commandments is a prominent theme throughout Hebrew wisdom literature. The book of Proverbs begins with an admonition to the reader to listen to the words of wisdom and practical instruction recorded in the book, for "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). Likewise, the author of Ecclesiastes concludes his book with the following warning: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). This theme is similarly expressed in the book of Job: "And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding'" (Job 28:28). But what is the situation involving God about which the wise are fearful and which thus prompts (wise) obedience to God's commands?

Here it will be helpful to employ St. Thomas Aquinas' distinction between four kinds of fear.[12] According to Aquinas, and in keeping with Roberts' analysis of fear introduced above, fear is always directed toward some (apparently) evil prospect and typically gives rise to a consequent desire to avoid the evil prospect in view. He

[12] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Fathers of the English Domincan Province, trans. (New York: Benzinger Bros., 1948), reprinted by (Allen, TX: Thomas More Publishing, 1981), II-II, Q 19, a 2, 1245 (page numbers refer to the reprinted edition). From this point forward I shall abbreviate *Summa Theologica* with *ST*.

observes, however, that sometimes we fear and thus desire to avoid evils in such a way that we turn from God, as when Augustine feared the ridicule of his friends and so participated in their vicious pear thievery. Aquinas classifies such fears as human or worldly fear. On the other hand, we sometimes fear and thus desire to avoid evils in such a way that we turn toward God in obedience. Aquinas distinguishes two kinds of evils fear of which prompts us to turn to God: evils of punishment and evils of fault.[13] Aquinas thus distinguishes two corresponding kinds of fear: servile fear (of punishment), and chaste or filial fear (of fault). The fourth and final kind of fear Aquinas identifies is a sort of mixture of servile fear of punishment and filial fear of fault and this he calls initial fear.

Servile fear and filial fear both motivate turning to God in obedience, but whereas the former does so out of fear of punishment from God, the latter does so out of fear of disobeying God. The difference between the two is analogous to the difference between one child's fear of the punishment he might receive if caught disobeying his parents and another child's fear of disobeying his parents and thus harming his relationship with them, whether or not he gets caught. Whereas the first child's fear is grounded in a self-loving concern to avoid the pains of punishment (physical or otherwise), the second child's fear is grounded in his other-regarding concern to love and honor his parents by obeying them. Indeed, Aquinas suggests that an important, if not the primary, distinguishing mark between servile and filial fear is that the former is grounded in self-love, while the latter is grounded in charity or love of God.

[13] *ST* II-II Q. 19, a 2, 1245.

According to Aquinas, both servile fear and filial fear are properly understood to be the beginning of wisdom in some sense. He argues that while neither kind of fear is the beginning of wisdom in the sense of constituting the essence of wisdom, they are both the beginning of wisdom in the sense that they constitute the first effect of wisdom. He writes:

> the beginning of wisdom as to its essence consists in the first principles of wisdom, i.e., the articles of faith and in this sense faith is said to be the beginning of wisdom. But as regards the effect, the beginning of wisdom is the point where wisdom begins to work, and in this way fear is the beginning of wisdom, yet servile fear in one way, and filial fear, in another. For servile fear is like a principle disposing a man to wisdom from without, in so far as he refrains from sin through fear of punishment, and is thus fashioned for the effect of wisdom, according to Ecclus. i. 27, *The fear of the Lord driveth out sin*. On the other hand, chaste or filial fear is the beginning of wisdom, as being the first effect of wisdom. For since the regulation of human conduct by the Divine law belongs to wisdom, in order to make a beginning, man must first of all fear God and submit himself to Him: for the result will be that in all things he will be ruled by God.[14]

So, according to Aquinas, servile fear of punishment is the beginning of wisdom, not in the sense that the wise person is characteristically disposed to be motivated to virtuous action by fear of punishment (she is not), but rather in the sense that servile fear motivates obedience to God's commands, which is to say that it motivates doing the same actions that the wise person does (albeit for different reasons). We might thus say that servile fear is the simulated first effect of wisdom. The person with servile fear acts wisely, but not (at least not yet) as a result of wisdom.

Filial fear, on the other hand, is the beginning of wisdom in the sense that it is the actual first effect of wisdom, where actual can be understood in two senses. First, filial fear is the actual as opposed to the merely simulated first effect of wisdom. The person

[14] *ST* II-II, Q. 19, a. 7, 1249.

with filial fear acts wisely *out of wisdom*; filial fear and the right action it motivates are actually caused by wisdom. Secondly, filial fear is the actual first effect of wisdom in the sense that it is not merely the emotion of fear of fault that Aquinas has in view, but rather the emotion of fear, together with its consequent desire to act rightly and (typically) the right action to which the desire gives rise. For Aquinas, as for the Psalmist and the other Hebrew wisdom writers, the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom is not merely an emotion, but is rather the combination of an emotion (or emotion-disposition) and the actual (or active) obedience to God it motivates. Indeed, filial fear is the actualization of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is thus perhaps best understood, not merely as an episodic emotion, but rather as a full-fledged theistic-moral virtue, which at once disposes its bearer to feel and to act rightly in response to God and his commands.

Whereas the conception of wisdom that arises out of thinking of wisdom as beginning in wonder is a predominantly theoretical conception, the conception of wisdom that arises out of thinking of the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom, is eminently practical and moral. By contrast with wonder, which is grounded in a love of great things and a desire to discover and which thus motivates the search for deeper understanding or intellectual intimacy, the fear of the Lord to which the Psalmist refers is grounded in a concern for virtuous living (i.e., a desire to live virtuously), understood as being constituted by obedience to God, and motivates right action. Indeed, whereas Aristotle identifies one's ability to teach as the primary sign of wisdom,[15] the Psalmist identifies virtuous action as the primary sign of wisdom.

[15] *Metaphysics* A.1, 981b9-10, 1553.

This is not to say that the two conceptions of wisdom, much less the two traditions, under consideration are incompatible. For one thing, wonder is identified by the Aristotelian tradition as the beginning of philosophy (i.e., the search for wisdom) while fear of the Lord is identified by the Psalmist's tradition, elucidated by Aquinas, as the actualization of wisdom. Once we disambiguate the sense in which wisdom is thought to 'begin' in each of these emotions, respectively, no tension remains between the two traditional insights. Moreover, understanding of the objects of wonder might in fact lead to the kind of fear of fault that motivates virtuous action, thereby unifying the theoretical and practical aspects of wisdom. It is to this possibility that I now turn my attention.

2. Wisdom as Virtuous Understanding

As we saw above, Aristotle's discussion of wonder as the beginning of the search for wisdom emphasizes the theoretical nature of wisdom (*sophia*) – understanding of general, ultimate explanatory principles/causes, the kind of epistemically valuable understanding discussed in chapter three. Aristotle famously distinguishes (in book VI of *Nicomachean Ethics* among other places) theoretical wisdom from the practical intellectual virtue of *phronesis*, typically translated "practical wisdom." Interpreters have long struggled to determine the precise relationship between these two intellectual virtues for Aristotle. I am not primarily concerned here with settling this interpretive issue, but rather with the related question whether there are in fact two different kinds of wisdom – theoretical and practical – or whether there is just one thing properly called wisdom, which is at once both theoretical and practical? Put in terms of the above discussion, is there one kind of wisdom the pursuit of which begins in wonder and another that is

actualized in moral virtue (e.g., the fear of the Lord), or is the wisdom for which wonder motivates us to seek properly manifest in moral virtue? Following the recent work of C. Stephen Evans on this question, I contend that there is just one state properly called wisdom that is constituted by deep, appreciative understanding of that which is good (i.e., the proper objects of wonder).[16] I shall argue moreover that the understanding constitutive of wisdom essentially involves virtuous concerns and emotion-dispositions, thereby contributing to a virtuous human life. Wisdom is, in short, virtuous understanding. While this analysis of wisdom is a bit complex I think it helpfully captures all of the most important essential aspects of wisdom. In the paragraphs to follow I shall argue for each component of the analysis in turn.

2.1 Wisdom as Ontological Understanding

As Aristotle rightly observed, wisdom is a kind of understanding. Several recent theorists have followed Aristotle in defining wisdom, or at least one kind of wisdom, as a special kind of (deep) understanding. Dennis Whitcomb, for example, distinguishes theoretical wisdom from practical wisdom and defines the former as "deep understanding";[17] Linda Zagzebski also distinguishes two kinds of wisdom and, though she does not explicitly define wisdom as a kind of understanding or employ the metaphor 'deep,' she offers what I take to be an explanation of the metaphor of deepness, arguing that "understanding involves the comprehension of structures of reality other than its propositional structure" and then explains that "[theoretical] [w]isdom is neither a matter

[16] C. Stephen Evans, "Wisdom as Conceptual Understanding," *Faith and Philosophy* 27, no. 4 (2010): 369-81.

[17] Dennis Whitcomb, "Wisdom," in Sven Bernecker and Duncan Pritchard, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 95-105.

of the properties of propositional beliefs, nor is it a matter of the relations among such beliefs; it is a matter of grasping the whole of reality";[18] Evans argues for a unified Platonic theory of wisdom according to which wisdom is a kind of deep conceptual understanding (ultimately of the Forms) that involves action-guiding appreciation of the value of the realities (Forms) understood.[19] In keeping with Zagzebski's distinction between understanding mere propositional relationships and "grasping the whole of reality," Evans argues that "deep" understanding or knowledge involves acquaintance with the (ontological) nature of those objects in the world that are most fundamentally real (i.e., the Forms), as well as an appreciation of their value. We saw in chapter three how experiential (emotional) acquaintance with an object and appreciative understanding of its value go hand in hand. I will address the appreciative aspect of the understanding constitutive of wisdom later in this chapter. For now, I shall limit my focus to the claim that wisdom essentially involves ontological understanding of that which is fundamentally real.

I agree with Whitcomb, Zagzebski, and Evans that wisdom essentially involves understanding of the world in which we live. Wisdom is, at least in part, a profound intellectual accomplishment. We typically do not attribute wisdom to children; nor do we think most children are capable of achieving wisdom prior to adulthood. While this might be explained in part by the fact that a large and varied body of life experience is a necessary pre-condition for wisdom, it also seems to be explained, at least partially, by the limited understanding children possess. In fact, the reason we think life experience is

[18] Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[19] Evans, "Wisdom as Conceptual Understanding."

a necessary precondition for wisdom might very well be that we recognize that life experience is a necessary precondition for understanding. Most children are not considered wise because they lack understanding and they lack understanding, at least in many cases, because they lack experience of (and, hence, acquaintance with) the world.[20]

In addition to the observation that we do not typically think children capable of wisdom, a conception of wisdom as involving deep (ontological) understanding is supported by the following thought experiment suggested by Whitcomb.[21] Consider two individuals, Prudence and Sophia, who both possess the same degree of practical understanding concerning how to live well, such that they both can always discern the best choice to make in difficult circumstances (when there is a best choice) and are both equally capable of giving good advice to others about how to live. Unlike Prudence, however, Sophia possesses profound metaphysical and scientific understanding of the world in which we live. Whitcomb suggests, and I agree, that it is right to say that Sophia is wiser than Prudence.

Following Griffiths' distinctions between various kinds of wonder introduced above, we might distinguish the objects of the wise person's understanding into three general categories: metaphysical understanding of the nature of fundamental reality (basic ontological explanation), moral-psychological understanding of the nature of the human self, and 'scientific' understanding of the many and diverse objects that comprise the natural world. According to Aristotle's causal analysis of the nature of existents, the

[20] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, W.D. Ross, trans., revised by J.O. Urmson, in Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle Vol. 2*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 6.8, 1142a11-20, 1803. From this point forward I shall abbreviate *Nicomachean Ethics* with *NE*.

[21] Whitcomb, "Wisdom," 99.

person with theoretical wisdom will have a deep understanding not only of the essences of these objects (their formal causes), but also of the causes of their coming into being (their efficient causes), the 'stuff' of which they are comprised (their material causes), and their proper ends or *teloi* (their final causes). It certainly does seem that a person with such deep understanding of the world in which we live and the place we humans (and other creatures) occupy within it seems to possess a great deal of wisdom. Were we to encounter a person who truly understood where this world came from, what it is, and what it exists for, or where we humans came from, what we fundamentally are, and what we exist for, we would do well to seek out their teaching and learn from their profound insights. For, however else wisdom might be valuable, wisdom is an exceedingly good achievement of ontological understanding.

2.2 Wisdom as Practical Understanding

But is wisdom purely an achievement of theoretical, ontological understanding? Is the possession of practically (and, hence, morally) irrelevant ontological understanding or knowledge about some aspect of the world sufficient for wisdom? What should we say, for example, about the astrophysicist who possesses a deep conceptual grasp of the fundamental laws of physics that explain the behavior of physical objects in our universe, but who regularly sabotages her personal relationships in order to free up more time for her research and otherwise makes choices that lead to her living an on-the-whole miserable life? Whitcomb has recently argued for a "two-fold" theory of wisdom according to which it is appropriate to say that our astrophysicist is theoretically wise (at least with respect to her primary field of study), but not practically wise. Writes Whitcomb, "There are two kinds of wisdom: practical and theoretical. To be practically

wise is to know how to live well. To be theoretically wise is to have deep understanding."[22]

While the determination on this case to which Whitcomb's analysis leads might seem initially plausible, it should be rejected. Rather than saying that our astrophysicist is simultaneously (theoretically) wise and (practically) foolish, we ought to say that while she possesses some deep and truly impressive understanding of a particular aspect of the world, she lacks wisdom insofar as she fails to integrate her understanding with understanding how to live well. As Whitcomb rightly points out, wise people tend to be able to give good practical advice. In fact, Whitcomb takes it to be a test for any plausible theory of wisdom that it be able to explain the connection between wisdom and the giving of good practical advice. Whitcomb argues that this supports his two-fold theory, since on his theory people who are practically wise know how to live well and thus are generally capable of giving good advice, even if those who possess theoretical wisdom might lack such understanding. On the contrary, what his observation concerning the relationship between wisdom and good advice giving reveals is that wisdom essentially involves understanding how to live well. The observation is not that there is one kind of wisdom (among possible other kinds) that enables good advice giving, but rather that wisdom (the only kind there is) enables good advice giving. It thus seems strange, and perhaps even contradictory, to say, "Susan, the famous philosopher, is very wise, but she does not understand how to live well, so you should not seek her advice." While Whitcomb would explain away the tension here by appealing to a shift in focus from theoretical wisdom, which one might be inclined to attribute to Susan, to

[22] Whitcomb, "Wisdom," 101.

practical foolishness, this is not consistent with ordinary usage of the term 'wisdom.' While many people might initially be inclined to say of a distinguished professor who has deep understanding of philosophy, some natural science, or some other field that she is wise on the basis of that understanding, most would likely revoke such an attribution upon learning that the professor regularly makes ill-advised financial investments or is inept at showing love to her family. On my view this is best explained not by the suggestion that the information about her financial investments or family relationships brings practical wisdom into view (and pushes theoretical wisdom out of view), but rather by the claim that the information about her financial investments or relationships fills out a more complete picture of her life. On the more complete picture of her life, the initial evidence in favor of an attribution of wisdom (i.e., her impressive understanding of the subject matter of her academic field) is outweighed or defeated by the evidence of her foolishness (i.e., her poor financial decision making). What this reveals is that while deep theoretical understanding of the world might enhance one's wisdom when integrated with practical understanding concerning how to live well, deep theoretical understanding is not by itself sufficient for wisdom.

It will be objected at this point that I am simply defending a practical-only theory of wisdom, according to which wisdom just is understanding how to live well and, the objector will continue, such theories fail to account for the apparent fact that deep understanding of the nature of ultimate reality, the human self, and the phenomena of natural science are, as Aristotle emphasizes, constitutive of wisdom. In reply I admit that my theory of wisdom is, in one sense, a practical-only theory. That is, according to my analysis, all of the understanding constitutive of wisdom contributes in one way or

another to living a well-lived life. Insofar as some understanding fails to contribute to (or, worse, impedes) living a flourishing human life, it does not enhance wisdom, no matter how impressive an intellectual accomplishment. What this suggests is that there is a kind of understanding – that characterized by an ability to explain – that is not by itself (i.e., when divorced from appreciative understanding) sufficient for wisdom (more on this below).

This does not mean, however, that the understanding constitutive of wisdom is limited to understanding how to live well, narrowly conceived. Much so-called theoretical understanding is capable of contributing to living a flourishing human life. For one thing, as intimated above, humans are rational creatures and seem to be 'hard-wired' with a desire for deep ontological understanding of themselves and the world they inhabit. It thus seems that the best human lives will include the achievement of such ontological understanding. In other words, ontological understanding can contribute to living a flourishing human life by being partially constitutive of such a life. We are thus right to judge that a person who understands how to live well and who understands deeply some of the more complex features of the physical world, morality, fundamental reality, etc., is wiser than the person who merely understands how to live well, but is ignorant of these 'deeper' things.

Moreover, deep ontological understanding of human nature and the world (perhaps including God) in which we live, move and have our being, can enhance our understanding of the best way to live as a human being within this world. As Aristotle explains in his discussion of wisdom (*sophia*), "the science which knows to what end each thing must be done is the most authoritative of the sciences, and more authoritative

than any ancillary science; and this end is the good in each class, and in general the supreme good in the whole of nature" and, therefore, wisdom "must be a science that investigates the first principles and causes; for the good, i.e. that for the sake of which, is one of the causes."[23] In these passages Aristotle seems to unite practical and theoretical wisdom more than he does elsewhere by including at least an aspect of practical wisdom in theoretical wisdom. Indeed, as Aristotle notes, to have wisdom is to understand the purpose, indeed the meaning, of human life and the *telos* of the world in which we live and such understanding of the good, as we shall see later on, is an essential element of practical wisdom.

Such understanding has great practical and moral import. For, as Aristotle explains in his discussion of *phronesis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, wise judgments about proper conduct rely on understanding of the ultimate end of human conduct: "The man who is without qualification good at deliberating is the man who is capable of aiming in accordance with calculation at the best for man of things attainable by action."[24] In his discussion of Aquinas' treatment of prudence Talbot Brewer likewise explains that the practical aspect of wisdom entails some deep understanding of the good: "Understanding is a part of the practical virtue of prudence, and we must make use of understanding if we are to direct our will consistently towards the good….The understanding required for prudence in practical reasoning is not only understanding of the final end but also of more specific principles of action and of the particulars that fall under these principles."[25]

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[23] *Metaphysics* A.2, 982b4-10, 1554.

[24] *NE* 6.7, 1141b12-14, 1802.

[25] Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 100.

In other words, one cannot fully understand how to live well as a human in the world without some deep understanding of the goal or ultimate good of human life. Moreover, one cannot fully understand how to live well as a human in the world without some deep understanding of the nature of humanity, the nature of the world, etc. So, deep theoretical understanding of that which is good can enhance wisdom; that is, it can make one wiser. But, as evidenced by the cases of the unwise scientists examined above, it can only do so insofar as it is integrated with practical understanding concerning how to live well. Wisdom is not deep understanding of some complex feature(s) of the world divorced (or divorceable) from understanding how to live well, but rather understanding how to live well that is informed by and integrated with understanding of the wonderful and complex feature(s) of the world in which we live. Just as understanding comes in degrees, then, so does wisdom. And, one can be more or less wise depending on the degree of one's understanding of the nature of the non-human world, the human self, and the various complex relationships between them.

2.3 Wisdom as Appreciative Understanding

To contribute to a flourishing life, the ontological understanding constitutive of wisdom must also involve appreciation of the value of the (good) objects understood. As illustrated in the example of the miserable astrophysicist considered above, the pursuit of deep understanding can impede the living of a flourishing life when one fails to appreciate appropriately the value of that which is understood. Moreover, one can possess an impressive degree of understanding without possessing wisdom, due to a failure to appreciate the value of one's own understanding. Not only is our miserable astrophysicist foolish on account of her failing to apply her impressive intellectual

abilities to discerning how best to live, but her understanding of astrophysics itself and, hence, her wisdom is diminished by her failure to appreciate its value and importance.

Perhaps it will help us to see this point more clearly if we consider another scientist, this time a zoologist, who spends years studying a particular bat species and achieves deep knowledge and understanding of the bat's biological functions, behavior patterns, etc., but who overvalues her scientific understanding of the bat (or its species) and, by contrast, undervalues other more important aspects of her world. Imagine, for example, that the zoologist becomes angrier about harm done to the bat than she does about harm done to her own children and she fails to remember or pay attention to important moments in her children's lives because so preoccupied with thoughts of her research. The failure of the zoologist to appreciate properly the value of the bat (by overvaluing it), just as the failure of the astrophysicist to appreciate properly the value of her research, undermines what wisdom might otherwise have been enhanced by her deep scientific understanding. We can thus fail to achieve wisdom by overvaluing and, hence, failing to appreciate the value of that which is understood.

We can also fail to achieve wisdom by under-appreciating the significance for our lives of that which we understand. It is this insight that motivates Søren Kierkegaard's distinction between two kinds of understanding. In the midst of his sustained treatment of sin as a kind of despair, Kierkegaard's pseudonym Anti-Climacus suggests a problem for the Socratic doctrine that sin is ignorance (a negative derivation of the Socratic teaching that knowledge is virtue).[26] He argues that if, as it seems, understanding of right

[26] Søren Kierkegaard (under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus), *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, trans. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 92.

and wrong is a precondition of sin (i.e., those who do wrong without understanding it is wrong are not morally culpable) and if, as per Socrates, understanding what is right is a sufficient condition for behaving rightly, then it follows that sin does not exist. As Anti-Climacus puts it, "if the Socratic definition is sound, then there is no sin at all."[27] Hence, it must be possible to do wrong while (in some sense) understanding what is right. And yet, Anti-Climacus agrees with Socrates that when one claims to understand what the right thing to do is, but then fails to do it, it seems that one has not (in some sense) understood what is right. He reflects, "Does this mean, then, that to understand and to understand are two different things? They certainly are, and the person who has understood this—but, please note, not in the sense of the first kind of understanding—is *eo ipso* initiated into all the secrets of irony."[28]

Anti-Climacus thus distinguishes two senses of understanding, at least with respect to ethical and religious spheres of inquiry. The distinguishing mark of the two types of understanding is that while it is possible to have the first type of understanding without sufficiently appreciating the value of that which is understood and thus without being sufficiently motivated to act accordingly (and this is "tragic-comic"), the second type of understanding essentially involves action-motivating appreciation of the value of what is understood. Following Kierkegaard's objectivity/subjectivity dialectic, we might

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From this point forward, I shall abbreviate Kierkegaard's *The Sickness Unto Death* with *SUD*.

[27] *SUD*, 89.

[28] *SUD*, 90.

call understanding in the former sense objective understanding, and understanding of the latter variety subjective understanding.[29]

About objective understanding Anti-Climacus writes, "when a man stands and says the right thing, and consequently has understood it, and then when he acts he does the wrong thing, and thus shows that he has not understood it—yes, this is exceedingly comic."[30] I take it that Anti-Climacus is here identifying verbal assent (or the disposition to verbal assent) as the primary sign of objective understanding, not as its essence. If the distinctive characteristic of objective understanding is that it fails to include motivational appreciation of the value of that which is understood, it seems that one could have a fairly robust grasp of moral or religious truths—a true cognitive achievement—without appreciating the value of any of it. It does not take a long life in a university setting to discover obvious exemplars of such merely objective understanding. Indeed, anyone who has ever undertaken the academic study of ethics, theology, or biblical studies and who is at all self-reflective surely knows how easy it is to increase one's "understanding" of such matters without appreciating the value of the subject matter for one's life.

Subjective understanding, on the other hand, essentially involves an action-motivating appreciation of what Roberts calls the "self-implicating character" of the

[29] I do not, however, argue that subjective understanding is identical to what Kierkegaard's pseudonyms call subjectivity. While subjective understanding essentially involves subjectivity, Kierkegaard might allow for some degree of subjectivity even where the beliefs involved are false. Additionally, I deny that objective understanding is always grounded in the psychological stance Kierkegaard calls objectivity. In fact, subjective understanding is required for objective understanding of matters of value.

[30] *SUD*, 91.

concepts or truths understood.[31] That is, subjective understanding involves not only the grasping of conceptual connections, manifest in the ability to explain, but also affect or feeling directed toward that which is understood, which can contribute to motivating behavior in keeping with the understanding. Note that one might have objective understanding even of the self-implicating character of moral and religious principles without feeling the weight of those principles in particular situations. Jim might, for example, understand that one ought to love one's neighbor as oneself and that this entails that he ought to treat his colleague Frank with kindness, but nevertheless fail to appreciate or *feel* the significance of that normative judgment (i.e., fail to feel goodwill toward Frank and the various emotions that might involve). When one has subjective understanding, by contrast, one understands the how the relevant concepts or principles relate to one's own existence, what they require of one, and one appreciates or affectively experiences their value and is thus often motivated to act accordingly (though perhaps not always so, such as in cases where the feeling is overwhelmed by other counter-motivations). Subjective understanding, in other words, is deep appreciative understanding of the good that contributes to living a virtuous human life – i.e., wisdom.

2.4 Wisdom as Virtue

The cases of the miserable astrophysicist and the bat-obsessed zoologist, together with Kierkegaard's observations concerning under-appreciative moral and religious understanding, reveal that wisdom essentially involves not only deep ontological understanding, but also rightly ordered or virtuous concerns and virtuous emotional

[31] Roberts, "Thinking Subjectively," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11, no. 2 (1980): 71-92.

sensitivities grounded in those concerns. The miserable astrophysicist achieved deep understanding of the physical laws and properties of the universe, but failed to achieve and manifest wisdom because of her inordinate, excessive concern to advance her research and her inordinate lack of concern for the other elements of a flourishing human life, including meaningful human relationships. The obsessed zoologist achieved impressive understanding of her bat, but failed to exemplify wisdom because of her inordinate, excessive concern for her understanding of the bat and her lack of concern for her own children. Kierkegaard's 'tragic-comic' individual, who understands what he ought to do but fails to appreciate the significance of that normativity in a way that might motivate action, fails to achieve wisdom on account of his insufficient concern for living virtuously, doing his duty, loving his neighbor, etc.

By failing to subordinate their desire for understanding to concerns for other greater goods, each of these characters exemplifies a version of the vice medieval Christian philosophers called "curiosity" (*curiositas*). The wise person, by contrast, exemplifies the virtue of studiousness (*studiositas*), which is a rightly ordered concern for understanding or knowledge. As Jay Wood explains,

> We achieve studiousness and avoid curiosity when we properly situate our efforts to gain and use knowledge within a comprehensive framework of concerns that includes a commitment to a particular vision of the good life. This vision includes many elements, such as beliefs about the ends of human beings, an awareness of the responsibilities one bears within a community, and a detailed understanding of the elements that make up moral and intellectual character. Wisdom lies in undertaking to discover the elements of this comprehensive framework and appropriately orienting one's entire life (not just one's intellectual or academic efforts) to this vision.[32]

[32] W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, IN: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 60.

As Wood rightly points out, the concerns characteristic of studiousness and other virtues are partially constitutive of wisdom. And, given that emotions are concern-based construals, it should not surprise us to discover that the virtuous concerns involved in wisdom, as well as their vicious counterparts, are emotion-dispositions. In each of the cases considered above, the disordered concerns in view function as the basis of disordered emotion-sensitivities, which distort the agents' appreciative (affective) perceptions of value. For example, the astrophysicist is not properly emotionally sensitive to (i.e., she fails to appreciate) her own need for human friendship. Likewise, the zoologist's over-concern for her scientific understanding of the bat and under-concern for her children causes her to develop a disordered anger-sensitivity – she responds with too much anger to wrongs done to the bat and fails to respond to the value of her children with appropriate loving emotions. Similarly, we might imagine a person who has 'objective' understanding of the fact that he ought to help the victims of a tragic natural disaster, but who fails to 'see' the victims through the eyes of compassion as a result of a lack of concern for their well-being.

While disordered concerns can give rise to disordered emotional sensitivities, one can also fail to be wise because of disordered emotional sensitivities even when one's concerns are properly ordered. One might, for example have a deep concern for justice, but be disposed to get angry or indignant more often and to a greater degree than is warranted, due to an insufficient perceptual sensitivity to the presence and severity of injustices. That is, one might rightly be concerned for justice, but be so poor at perceiving injustices, perhaps because one has an exaggerated notion of individual rights,

that one sees injustice everywhere one turns.[33] So, the wise person must not only exhibit properly ordered concerns, but must also have conceptual mastery of various degrees and kinds of value, thereby possessing apt emotional sensitivities.

In keeping with the Psalmist's tradition, according to which wisdom is actualized in a concern for moral righteousness and apt emotional sensitivities to the demands of the moral (and divine) law, wisdom thus essentially involves virtuous concerns and conceptual adeptness. Dispositions to have apt emotional perceptions of the value we encounter in the world are appropriately called virtuous because, as we have learned from the ancient philosophical tradition of virtue ethics, most, if not all, of the moral virtues are at least partially constituted by reliable dispositions to have the right emotion at the right time toward the right object and in the right degree.[34] The claim that wisdom essentially involves virtuous emotion-dispositions is thus a development of the classical philosophical insight that wisdom is closely connected with the moral virtues.[35]

In addition to functioning as appreciative perceptions of the value of the objects of understanding, virtuous emotion-dispositions are also involved in the practical reasoning aspect of wisdom that is often associated with the virtue Aristotle identifies as

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[33] Henry Fairlie argues that our overblown sense of individual rights contributes in precisely this way to our society's problem with the vice of anger (*The Seven Deadly Sins Today* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979], 85-110).

[34] As Zagzebski explains, "Virtues are not themselves feelings, but almost every writer on the moral virtues has connected them with feelings" (*Virtues of the Mind*, 128). Robert Roberts and Jay Wood defend the similar claim that "pretty much the whole range of virtues, both intellectual and moral, are in part dispositions with respect to emotions" (Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, "Proper Function, Emotion, and Virtues of the Intellect," *Faith and Philosophy*, 21, no. 1 [2004]: 4).

[35] To again quote Zagzebski, "Wisdom and understanding have often been considered virtues themselves, and even if they are not, it is clear that they are closely associated with virtues" (*Virtues of the Mind*, 51).

phronesis and his medieval followers called *prudence*. For, as Talbot Brewer explains, "it is central to Aristotle's purposes to insist that phronesis is not merely a matter of the content of one's explicit syllogisms but also of the patterns of evaluative attention or sensitivity that set the stage for explicit episodes of practical deliberation."[36]

To see this, we must now engage in some exegesis of Aristotle, which will in turn lend support to the perceptual analysis of emotions defended throughout this dissertation as well as my present thesis that virtuous emotions (or emotion-dispositions) are partially constitutive of wisdom, encompassing as it does Aristotelian *phronesis*. Although Aristotle nowhere explicitly argues for a role for emotions in wisdom (practical or theoretical), there is good reason to conclude that Aristotle did think emotions played an important role in both the perceptual and deliberative aspects of practical wisdom. Although he does not address the perceptual nature of emotions in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *De Anima* he writes, "It appears that the soul suffers and does most things not without body like getting angry, being confident, desiring appetitively, in general perceiving…."[37] Martha Nussbaum and Hilary Putman argue that this passage contains an instance of a grammatical structure Aristotle employs elsewhere that indicates species-genus relations. They write: "when Aristotle uses expressions of the form '*x*,*y*,*z*, and in general (*holos*) *A*,' what he means by this is that *A* is a genus of which *x*, *y*, and *z* are some of the species. So unless this passage is exceptional, Aristotle is actually treating emotion as a type of perception, a selective cognitive awareness of an object or objects in

[36] Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, 102.

[37] Aristotle, *De Anima* 403a5; this translation supplied by Martha C. Nussbaum and Hilary Putnam in "Changing Aristotle's Mind," in Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, eds., *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, (New York: Oxford University Press 42.

the world."[38] As other examples of this pattern in Aristotle's writing, Nussbaum and Putnam cite *Metaphysics* E.1 – "If then all natural things are analogous to the snub in their nature—e.g., nose, eye, face, flesh, bone, and, in general, animal; leaf, root, bark and, in general, plant…"[39] – and the opening of *De Sensu* – "It is evident that the most important functions, both those shared by animals with other creatures and those peculiar to animals, are shared by the soul and the body, e.g., perception and memory, and emotion and appetite and in general desire…."[40] This textual argument is compelling.

Further, though less explicit, evidence of the perceptual nature of emotions for Aristotle is available in his *Rhetoric*. He writes, "The emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure."[41] Thus, for Aristotle, emotions, like sense perceptions, tend to produce beliefs. Moreover, as Deborah Achtenberg has recently argued, Aristotle's suggestion here that emotions are accompanied by pleasure and pain is further evidence, when taken together with Aristotle's comments on the relationship between perception, pleasure and pain, that emotion is a kind of perception.[42] In *De Anima* Aristotle defines pleasure and pain as perception of good and bad, respectively: "To feel pleasure or pain is to act with the sensitive [or, perceptual] mean towards what is good or bad as such. Both avoidance and

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[38] Nussbaum and Putnam, "Changing Aristotle's Mind," 44.

[39] *Metaphysics* E.1, 1026a2-3, 1620.

[40] Translation by Nussbaum and Putnam in "Changing Aristotle's Mind," 41.

[41] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, W. Rhys Roberts, trans., in Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle Vol. 2* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2.1, 1378a21-22, 2195.

[42] Deborah Achtenberg, *Cognition of Value in Aristotle's Ethics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

appetite when actual are identical with this: the faculty of appetite and avoidance are not different, either from one another or from the faculty of sense-perception; but their being *is* different."[43] Without exploring every part of this rather mysterious saying, it is at least apparent that Aristotle understood the experience of pleasure and pain to be bound up in some essential way with perception of value and disvalue respectively. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, furthermore, Aristotle writes, "By emotions I mean such [states of soul] as spirit, fear, shame, desire, in general those [states] that are in themselves usually accompanied by perceptual pleasure and pain."[44] Hence, if emotions are accompanied by and, as often in Aristotle's definitions of individual emotions, identified with certain types of pleasures or pains, then emotions are, for Aristotle, perceptions of good and bad.[45] In other words, emotion is a distinctively evaluative kind of perception. Although many more passages could be cited in support of this view, the evidence presented here is sufficient for present purposes to demonstrate the reasonableness of concluding with Nussbaum and Putman that (at least with respect to emotion) "Desire and emotion are treated throughout [Aristotle's] corpus as forms of selective intentional awareness," i.e., as forms of perception.[46]

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[43] Aristotle, *De Anima*, J.A. Smith, trans., in Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle Vol.1* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3.7, 431a10-13, 685.

[44] *Eudemian Ethics* 2.2, 1220b12-14; translation by Achtenberg, *Cognition of Value in Aristotle's Ethics*, 160.

[45] Achtenberg fills out this analysis further, concluding that emotions are "perceptions or appearances of particular persons doing or experiencing something good or bad. Perceptions or appearances of them doing or experiencing something good are types of pleasure. Perceptions or appearances of them doing or experiencing something bad are types of pain" (*Cognition of Value in Aristotle's Ethics*, 169).

[46] Nussbaum and Putnam, "Changing Aristotle's Mind," 43.

So far we have seen that Aristotle defended the perceptual thesis of emotions I introduced in chapter one. I shall now show that Aristotle held that practical wisdom essentially involves the kind of evaluative perception characteristic of emotional experience. According to Aristotle, practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is a virtue of the soul's rational faculty, or power, *Nous* (often rendered "intellect" or "intelligence"). In the *Nicomachean Ethics* we learn that practical wisdom is excellence in deliberation about the best means of action for achieving the noble ends at which the moral virtues aim.[47] In addition to highlighting its deliberative aspect, Aristotle suggests that practical wisdom has a perceptual aspect as well. Richard Sorabji points out that Aristotle compares practical wisdom with sense perception five times in Book 6 (1142a27-30; 1143b5; 1143b14; 1144a29; 1144b1-17).[48] In the first of these comparisons, Aristotle explains that

> practical wisdom [*phronesis*] is concerned with the ultimate particular fact, which is the object not of knowledge but of perception [*aisthesis*]—not the perception of qualities peculiar to one sense but a perception akin to that by which we perceive that the particular figure before us is a triangle; for in that direction too there will be a limit. But this is rather perception than practical wisdom, though it is another kind of perception.[49]

Practical wisdom thus involves a kind of non-sensory, intuitive perception. Moreover, because practical wisdom is concerned with action directed toward good ends, (in other words, because practical wisdom is practical), the non-sensory perception involved ought to be understood as a distinctively evaluative species of perception. In later passages

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[47] Cf. *NE* 6.5, 1140a31; 6.12, 1144a7-9.

[48] Richard Sorabji, "Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue," in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Los Angeles: University of California Press), 206.

[49] *NE* 6.8 1142a27-30, 1803.

Aristotle explicitly connects this (evaluative) perceptual aspect of practical wisdom with a function of *Nous*. He writes, for instance, that

> in demonstrations comprehension [*Nous*] grasps the unchangeable and primary definitions, while in practical reasoning it grasps the last and contingent fact, i.e., the second proposition. For these are the starting-points of that for the sake of which, since the universals are reached from the particulars; of these therefore we must have perception, and this is comprehension.[50]

Aristotle here identifies *Nous* as the faculty of the rational part of the soul, the perceptual and deliberative excellences of which together constitute the virtue of practical wisdom. Interestingly, he also suggests in this passage that the perceptual and deliberative activities of *Nous* are not entirely distinct; that is, he suggests that moral deliberation, which takes the form of the practical syllogism, essentially involves the moral perception that is the focus of our present discussion. Indeed, moral deliberation essentially involves a kind of synthetic or constructive perception (construal) of the conclusion of the practical syllogism as following from the premises; that is, the agent actually *sees* how the premises fit together to support the conclusion. This should give pause to any who might be inclined to view the perceptual aspect of *Nous* as less important or more peripheral to practical wisdom than its deliberative counterpart, which Aristotle, at least initially, favors in his explicit characterizations of the intellectual virtue.

Presumably referring back to his prior identification of *Nous* as a percipient element of the soul, Aristotle again uses sense perception language metaphorically of *Nous*, and its virtue practical wisdom, when he writes: "Practical wisdom [*phronesis*] is not the faculty, but it does not exist without this faculty. And this eye of the soul [i.e., *Nous*] acquires its formed state [i.e, *phronesis*] not without the aid of excellence," for, the

[50] *NE* 6.11, 1143b1-6, 1805-6.

ultimate good of human nature "is not evident except to the good man."[51] *Nous* is, therefore, the "eye of the soul" that perceives the right course of action in any particular situation. Practical wisdom is (at least in part) excellence in such moral/practical perception.

In light of the passages enumerated above Sorabji rightly concludes that "Whatever other roles practical wisdom may or may not play, I suggest that one role is this. It enables a man, in the light of his conception of the good life in general, to perceive what generosity requires of him, or more generally what virtue and to kalon require of him, in the particular case, and it instructs him to act accordingly."[52] At the risk of stating the obvious, this perceptual activity of practical wisdom and, by extension, *Nous*, is intellectual in nature and thus belongs, for Aristotle, partially to the rational part of the soul. It is, in fact, the (cognitive, rational) perceptual role of practical wisdom that Sorabji points to as evidence for his thesis that intellect plays an important role in moral virtue for Aristotle. In other words, Sorabji takes it for granted, as it is well within reason for him to do, that the perception constitutive of practical wisdom is paradigmatic intellectual activity, albeit constitutive of complete moral virtue. He later characterizes this intellectual activity as a kind of "intuitive perception" of the right means/action in any given situation.[53] Such, as we have seen, is, indeed, Aristotle's view.

So far we have determined that emotion is, for Aristotle, a non-sensory, evaluative species of perception that grasps or construes its situational objects in terms of

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[51] *NE* 6.12, 1144a28-30, 1144a34-35, 1807.

[52] Sorabji, "Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue," 206.

[53] Sorabji, "Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue," 209.

value and disvalue. We have also seen that the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom is partially constituted by a non-sensory, evaluative species of perception. I contend that the non-sensory, evaluative species of perception that is partially constitutive of practical wisdom just is properly functioning or virtuous emotion. The similarities between the perception in practical wisdom and emotional perception are striking. Recall Sorabji's observation that, among its other possible roles, practical wisdom "enables a man, in the light of his conception of the good life in general, to perceive what generosity requires of him, or more generally what virtue and to kalon require of him, in the particular case, and it instructs him to act accordingly."[54] Such perceptions, or construals, of action-relevant situations in terms of one's conception of the good, i.e., as good or bad with respect to one's concern for the good, serve as paradigmatic instances of emotion on Roberts' Aristotelian concern-based construal analysis introduced above. Moreover, it seems that emotion, among the species of perception, is particularly well suited to account for the evaluative and motivational aspects of practical wisdom.

Hence, there exists a relationship of mutual dependence between practical wisdom and moral virtue. As Aristotle put it, "it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, nor practically wise without moral excellence."[55] Whereas the actions (*praxeis*) expressive of moral virtue depend on the guidance of practical wisdom to determine the appropriate means to the good end in view, practical wisdom depends on the emotions (*pathe*) expressive of moral virtue for its perceptual accuracy, as well as its motivational force. The dependence of practical wisdom on

[54] Sorabji, "Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue," 206.

[55] *NE* 6.13 1144b30-32, 1808.

properly formed emotions for its perceptual accuracy is implicit in Aristotle's claim, examined above, that "this eye of the soul [i.e., *Nous*] acquires its formed state [i.e, *phronesis*] not without the aid of excellence," for, the ultimate good of human nature "is not evident except to the good man."[56] Although Aristotle does not explicitly mention any role for emotion in practical wisdom, it is hard to imagine what else he might have had in mind here. For, moral virtue just is excellence of character with respect to actions and emotions. Though it is perhaps possible that Aristotle thought *Nous* could not acquire the virtue of practical wisdom without the agent first acting virtuously, this is unlikely since practical wisdom is a prerequisite of fully virtuous action for Aristotle. It is far more plausible, given the direction of the dependency relations as I have characterized them above, that Aristotle meant to suggest that *Nous* cannot acquire the virtue of practical wisdom without the agent first having properly formed emotions; for, as I have been arguing, properly formed emotions are constitutive of practical wisdom.

Understood in this way, while the mutual dependence between moral virtue and practical wisdom is circular, it is not viciously so. In other words, the dependency relations between moral virtue and practical wisdom are circular, but the circle has a beginning. The circle's beginning is in the proper formation of emotions. As the student of virtue develops proper emotion dispositions through habituation, she learns (develops) the virtue of practical wisdom. Throughout this educational process the student of virtue may be able to perform virtuous actions, but she will not be able to perform them in the way that the virtuous person does until she has developed stable emotion (pleasure/pain) and action dispositions; that is, until she has acquired the perceptual/deliberative virtue of

[56] *NE* 6.12, 1144a29-30, 1144a34-35, 1807.

practical wisdom. Once having acquired practical wisdom, she will be fully virtuous; "for with the presence of the one quality, practical wisdom, will be given all the excellences."[57]

The relevance of all of this for our present discussion is that the perceptual aspect of the intellectual virtue practical wisdom does not merely depend on, but is identical with the emotional aspect of moral virtue. What we might call emotional wisdom is, therefore, a virtue of the intellectual faculty *Nous* and, moreover, properly formed emotion-dispositions (i.e., moral virtues) are necessary for ideal intellectual as well as moral functioning.

Incidentally, if, as I have argued here, the evaluative perceptual role of practical wisdom is performed by/through emotion, then there is textual evidence in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that the justificatory thesis of emotion I defended in chapter two is implicit in Aristotle's own moral epistemology. With respect to experiential knowledge of particular contingent facts, Aristotle writes, "we ought to attend to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of experienced and older people or of people of practical wisdom not less than to demonstrations; for because experience has given them an eye they see aright."[58] Of course, Aristotle does not here employ the language of justification or warrant that has become commonplace in contemporary epistemology. Nevertheless, Aristotle's claim that the beliefs of the experienced, the elderly, and the practically wise are as trustworthy as the beliefs such individuals support with evidence or demonstration implies that non-inferential beliefs arrived at through the exercise of the perceptual

[57] *NE* 6.13, 1145a1-2, 1808.

[58] *NE* 6.11, 1143b11-14, 1806.

function of practical wisdom enjoy a kind of basic (though presumably defeasible) justification, much like that of beliefs arising out of properly functioning sense perception. Interestingly, Aristotle here suggests two ways in which the wise person's evaluative perception justifies beliefs, one direct, the other mediated through testimony. The judgments of the wise man are justified because his emotional intuition is functioning well and you and I are justified in accepting his testimony of his views because his emotional intuitions are functioning well. Even in the latter case, Aristotle's point is not to highlight the justificatory authority of testimony, but rather to highlight the justificatory authority of practical wisdom, generally, and, in particular, the evaluative perception I have identified with emotion. If I am right, therefore, that the perceptual activity of practical wisdom is characteristically emotional perception, then the emotions of the practically wise person do, themselves, according to Aristotle's subtle epistemology, provide defeasible justification for beliefs corresponding to and arising out of the value-laden construals that constitute those emotions.

Virtuous emotional perception is not only constitutive of that aspect of wisdom that involves immediately 'seeing' the right thing to do; it also contributes to the deliberative aspect of wisdom, according to which the wise are able to deliberate well about how one ought to act in a given situation. When making decisions about how to spend one's time, what sort of occupation to pursue, how to spend one's money, with whom to build friendships, even very wise people often do not immediately perceive the proper course of action, but rather they take time to deliberate. Indeed, given the complexities of the morally and practically significant situations humans encounter throughout their lives, wise people will often 'see' that the right thing to do is to

deliberate over important decisions. Such deliberation itself often involves emotional perception. When faced with a difficult decision, a wise person will consider the possible alternative actions, the likely consequences of those actions, and other factors relevant to the normative question, what ought I to do? These other factors might include whether one action or another might involve violating some *prima facie* obligation. When people consider such factors relevant to their decisions, emotions often are involved and serve as the embodiment of reasons for preferring one action to another.

Often when we consider the consequences or other normatively relevant features of an action, we experience emotional reactions to the value or disvalue of the prospects we imagine or the retrospects we are considering. While it is, in such cases, the evaluative feature of the situation that is properly said to be the wise person's reason for acting as she does, as I argued in chapter two the emotion might itself function for the wise person as a reason – perhaps her only reason – for believing that the object has the evaluative property the emotion picks out. These emotions may vary in intensity depending on the extent of the value or disvalue in view, or the apparent likelihood that the consequences we imagine will follow from our decision to act in one way or another. So, when considering whether to take a new job, one might consider how the new job will affect one's relationships with one's family, or how moving to a new city might benefit or harm one's children, or how one's friendships with one's current coworkers might be affected, or whether one has any moral obligation to remain in one's current job, etc. The answer to such questions are often met with emotion, e.g., anxiety at the prospect of upsetting one's spouse, sadness over the prospect of losing one's friends, hopefulness concerning the educational prospects for one's child in a new city, a feeling

of moral confidence that one is not (or would not be) violating an obligation, etc. We often appeal to such emotional responses in moral philosophizing and what are often referred to as 'moral intuitions' are often nothing more than the judgments we form on the basis of emotional responses to imagined moral scenarios. While we should not all trust our so-called 'moral intuitions' in every case, the wise person's emotion-based judgments concerning the value or disvalue of alternative courses of action can serve as reliable signs of the reasons to choose one course of action over another.

To see the importance of emotional perceptions of value for practical reasoning, consider the tragic case of Antonio Damasio's patient, Elliot.[59] Damasio explains that Elliot, who had once been a successful and competent business man, respected by his peers, and a good husband and father, was diagnosed in his thirties with a brain tumor that was compressing both frontal lobes upward from below. The tumor was removed, along with the damaged frontal lobe tissue, and Elliot's life was saved and his general health restored. Following his operation, however, Elliot's personality was drastically altered for the worse. His ability to manage his time and attention at work was greatly diminished, resulting in his eventual firing. His family life, too, began to fall apart. Damasio observed that Elliot's behavior revealed an acute inability to make what we might call rational decisions: "The tragedy of this otherwise healthy and intelligent man was that he was neither stupid nor ignorant, and yet he acted often as if he were. The machinery for his decision making was so flawed that he could no longer be an effective

[59] Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Avon Books, 1994).

social being."[60] Like Temple Grandin's deficiency with respect to evaluative understanding discussed in chapter three, Elliot's deficiency in practical decision making came accompanied by an emotional deficiency. According to Damasio,

> Elliot was far more mellow in his emotional display now than he had been before his illness. He seemed to approach life on the same neutral note. I never saw a tinge of emotion in my many hours of conversation with him: no sadness, no impatience, no frustration with my incessant and repetitious questioning. I learned that his behavior was the same in his own daily environment. He tended not to display anger, and on the rare occasions when he did, the outburst was swift; in no time he would be his usual new self, calm and without grudges.[61]

Not only was Elliot's deficiency in decision making accompanied by an emotional deficiency, but it, like Grandin's deficiency in evaluative understanding, seemed to be grounded in his emotional deficiency. As Damasio puts it, "the cold-bloodedness of Elliot's reasoning prevented him from assigning different values to different options, and made his decision-making landscape hopelessly flat."[62] Nevertheless, Elliot demonstrated through his performance in several controlled laboratory tasks that he retained the abilities "to conceptualize means to achieve social objectives, to predict the likely outcome of social situations, and to perform moral reasoning at an advanced development level."[63] In dynamic real life situations, however, Elliot could not with any consistency identify and actively choose behaviors that would contribute to the achievement of his goals. While Elliot might have retained the requisite evaluative concepts and, hence, some evaluative understanding in memory on the basis of emotional

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[60] Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 38.

[61] Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 45.

[62] Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 51.

[63] Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 48-9.

experiences enjoyed prior to his operation, after the removal of his tumor he lacked the ability to employ those evaluative concepts (i.e., that understanding) in particular situations that called for an action guiding choice between competing behaviors or tasks, even where the right choice would have been quite obvious to an emotionally normal person. Elliot thus failed adequately to appreciate the value of the social situations in which he found himself and of the options for action available to him and this dramatically impeded his practical reasoning.

In so impeding his practical reasoning, yet without damaging his theoretical moral understanding (even of moral principles), Elliot's emotional deficiency impeded his wisdom. It is perhaps inappropriate to judge Elliot to be foolish, since the term 'foolish' seems to connote some degree of blameworthy moral failure. After all, one can be unwise without being culpably foolish. While we thus might balk at the claim that Elliot was foolish, it would be incorrect to say of Elliot that, despite his practical irrationality, whatever wisdom he possessed prior to the removal of his tumor remained intact.

Whitcomb disagrees. In response to the claim of many virtue ethicists that wisdom cannot be had apart from moral virtue, Whitcomb writes,

> If it helps, we can recall that the devil was once an angel (or so the legend goes, of course). Should we say that the devil was wise as an angel but, through no loss of knowledge, became unwise in his attempt to take over the throne and his subsequent fall? That seems no more plausible than the view that the depression-inducing medication destroys the sage's wisdom, despite not destroying any of the sage's knowledge. It seems, then, that wisdom can coexist with both depression and with evil.[64]

According to Whitcomb's theory of wisdom, as long as an individual knows how to live well, she possesses (practical) wisdom, even if she has no concern for or appreciation of

[64] Whitcomb, "Wisdom," 98.

the value of living a good life. Whitcomb argues that since it seems as though the akratic person and people who are severely depressed or addicted to drugs suffer no loss of wisdom as a result of their pitiable state, even those who have positively wicked desires are capable of achieving wisdom.[65]

Tragically in cases like Elliot's, affective changes and alterations of concerns (even apart from any obvious loss of knowledge) do seem to result in the loss of wisdom. Indeed, while Elliot seems to retain his mere propositional knowledge of moral principles and even his ability to identify the proper application of those principles in some test cases, his operation resulted in his losing his acquaintance knowledge of the value of things, which as we saw above and in chapter three is essential to the deep, appreciative, ontological understanding of value that is constitutive of wisdom. Elliot might retain some semblance of wisdom in his propositional knowledge of moral principles and his ability to give good advice, but he is not wise. Elliot lacks some essential aspects of wisdom; namely, sustained concerns for the good and emotional perceptual sensitivities to the value of ordinary practical situations. Likewise, the devil might display some semblance of wisdom in his knowledge of how to live well, his ability (at least in principle) to give good advice, and some kind of understanding of the world (the kind evidenced by his ability to explain, but not by action-motivating appreciation of the significance of that which he understands), but he is not wise. The devil lacks at least one essential aspect of wisdom; namely, concern for living a good life. Such lack of concern, moreover, inhibits full understanding. While the devil might have knowledge of

[65] While Whitcomb's discussion here is focused on practical wisdom, I suspect he would grant that the wicked person can achieve theoretical wisdom (deep understanding) as well.

how to live well according to the 'thin' modern conception of knowledge as justified true belief plus an anti-Gettier condition, he does not have deep knowledge or deep ontological understanding of the value of a well-lived life. That is, he does not sufficiently appreciate (i.e., by being affectively acquainted with) the value of a well-lived life and, hence, does not really know or understand how to live life well. Much like Temple Grandin's concept of sublimity, the wicked individual's concept (and, hence, his understanding) of a good life is attenuated, due to his lack of an appropriate affective appreciation of its value.

Instead of judging that wicked individuals who know how to accomplish their evil goals are wise, we should say that they are shrewd or cunning.[66] While those who are merely shrewd possess the ability to see and deliberate well about the most effective means for achieving their goals (important elements of wisdom), their goals are not ultimately good for them (nor are they good simpliciter). One who fails to appreciate the value of living a truly good life is not wise, no matter how successful at reliably attaining what he wants.

2.5 Wisdom and the Good

Given that wisdom involves appreciative understanding of the value of that which is truly good, people who do not share each other's moral outlooks will make competing judgments about who counts as wise (i.e., whose understanding is properly appreciative of the value of that which is truly valuable). In other words, attributions of wisdom are not neutral among comprehensive moral views of the world. As previously noted,

[66] Cf., Evans, "Wisdom as Conceptual Understanding," 381.

Aristotle remarks that what is best for human persons "is not evident except to the good man; for wickedness perverts us and causes us to be deceived about the starting-points of action. Therefore it is evident that it is impossible to be practically wise without being good."[67] In a similar vein, Evans argues that wisdom is 'perspectival' and that the traditional Christian conception of wisdom is particularly polemical in the way that it challenges dominant non-Christian conceptions of wisdom, to the point of turning them on their heads.[68] Jay Wood argues further that this perspectival character of wisdom helps to explain the dearth of recent philosophical reflection and consensus concerning the nature of wisdom:

> Though philosophy is the discipline named for its study of wisdom, there is precious little said about wisdom in current philosophical circles, and what is said is the subject of enormous disagreement. One reason for the reticence as well as the disagreement is that wisdom is a complex notion whose precise contours are shaped significantly by the larger philosophical and religious traditions in which it is embedded. Both the content of wisdom and the most effective means to it are studied most accurately when viewed in the light of the philosophical and religious commitments that inform them.[69]

Given this perspectival nature of wisdom, it might be that some comprehensive moral outlooks explain the unification of the practical and theoretical aspects of wisdom better than others. According to Aquinas, for example, the practical and moral significance of the deep understanding of the good which constitutes wisdom is clearer on the Judeo-Christian worldview than it is on Aristotle's philosophical worldview. Aquinas argues,

> since wisdom is the knowledge of Divine things, as we shall state further on (Q. 45, A. 1), it is considered by us in one way, and in another way by philosophers.

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[67] *NE* 6.12 1144a34-7, 1807.

[68] Evans, "Wisdom as Conceptual Understanding," 380-81.

[69] W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, IN: IVP, 1998): 66.

> For, seeing that our life is ordained to the enjoyment of God, and is directed thereto according to a participation of the Divine Nature, conferred on us through grace, wisdom, as we look at it, is considered not only as being cognizant of God, as it is with the philosophers, but also as directing human conduct; since this is directed not only by the human law, but also by the Divine law….

The traditional Judeo-Christian conception of wisdom Aquinas here presents nicely unifies the theoretical and practical aspects of wisdom. Wisdom is deep, appreciative understanding of that which is good (i.e., that which rightly inspires wonder) and it essentially contributes to living a flourishing life. Since God is the ultimate ground of all being and goodness, according to the Judeo-Christian worldview, deep understanding of God is the paradigm of theoretical wisdom. As Aquinas rightly notes, since understanding God's nature deeply entails understanding and appreciating his (good) laws for holy living, wisdom essentially involves the concern to obey God (i.e., the fear of the Lord) by loving God and our fellow humans. Brewer observes a similar point in connection with Aquinas' discussion of the virtue of understanding:

> There is no possibility of understanding God without apprehending God's goodness, nor of apprehending God's goodness without love. A full and adequate appreciation of the nature of that goodness just is love. Straining to act virtuously, then, requires the same quest for clearer understanding of God that contemplation requires. This is why Aquinas insists that understanding is neither merely speculative nor merely practical but both at once.[70]

I have argued throughout this chapter that there is just one kind of wisdom that essentially involves deep (theoretical) understanding of that which is good as well as the concerns and practical/moral understanding constitutive of moral virtue. While this conception of wisdom is consistent with much that Aristotle and other non-Christian philosophers have said about wisdom, the unification of the theoretical with the practical

[70] Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, 101.

and affective aspects of wisdom is perhaps nowhere clearer than on the Christian conception of wisdom (and understanding) Aquinas presents.[71] On that conception, our appreciative understanding of God's holy nature naturally issues in our living good and flourishing lives. For, to know or understand God deeply is to be united with God, and to be united with God is the ultimate end of man. And, since being united to God is to love God and others (charity), to live a flourishing human life is to understand God deeply and to live out that understanding by living a life of virtue.

3. Conclusion

I have argued throughout this dissertation that emotions are essentially evaluative perceptual states and that, as such, they can contribute in many positive and significant ways to our achievement of epistemic goods including justified belief and understanding. In this last chapter I have provided an analysis of the relationship between emotion and what many philosophers consider to be the highest epistemic good – wisdom. In opposition to the view that there are two distinct and divorceable kinds of wisdom, I have argued that wisdom is deep, appreciative ontological understanding of that which is good (i.e., the proper objects of wonder) and that it essentially involves virtuous concerns and emotion-dispositions. Emotion is thus related to wisdom not only in the sense that our initial pursuit of wisdom is often prompted by the emotional experience of wonder, but also in the sense that wisdom is partially constituted by and initially exemplified in

[71] Plato's account of practical and theoretical wisdom is also arguably a unified account, as is his treatment of the moral and intellectual virtues. Perhaps the theistic conception of wisdom described here is thus closer to a Platonic conception than an Aristotelian one. Evans thus argues on behalf of a sort of Christian Platonism in his analysis of wisdom ("Wisdom as Conceptual Understanding").

virtuous emotional perceptions of value (both immediate and deliberative) that motivate virtuous action. Wisdom is not merely an intellectual or epistemic good or excellence. Wisdom is, rather, an excellence of the whole human person.

In this way wisdom is closely connected with the other epistemic goods considered throughout this dissertation. I have argued throughout the dissertation that emotions, as evaluative perceptual states, can help to produce justified beliefs, can deepen our understanding of value, and can contribute to our achievement and manifestation of wisdom. Thus, given that the moral virtues are partially constituted by apt emotional perceptual dispositions, the development of virtue can contribute to our achievement of justified beliefs, understanding of value, and ultimately wisdom. Thus, while I do not analyze justification or understanding in terms of virtue, the epistemology of emotions I present here is a kind of virtue epistemology. That is, it is an analysis that emphasizes the value of emotional perception and, hence, the value of moral virtue, for our achievement of epistemic goods. If we are to enjoy the full array of epistemic goods available to us as rational, emotional creatures, we must not only strive to improve our sense perceptual abilities, our memory, our synthetic reasoning, and so on, we must also pursue the formation of our emotional perceptions of value. By growing in emotional virtue, we can improve our ability to form justified evaluative beliefs on the basis of trust in our emotions, deepen our understanding of value, and even become wise.

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