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6

Emotions, Perceptions, and Reasons

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One of the most interesting developments in the theory of emotions has been the *perceptual model*. Supporters of this model maintain that emotional experiences represent evaluative properties, in much the same way that perceptual experiences represent non-evaluative properties. Because of this, supporters of the perceptual model hold that emotional experiences can play a similar epistemic role to that played by perceptual experiences: they can constitute justifying reasons with respect to beliefs or judgements. In this paper I want to raise some doubts about this picture of the epistemic role of emotional experiences, doubts which are grounded in a significant disanalogy between emotions and perceptions. In the first section of the paper I outline the perceptual model of emotion. In the second and third parts I raise some problems for the account, suggesting that emotions are not themselves reasons for evaluative judgements. And in the final part of the paper I respond to a possible objection, and explain how emotional experiences can still play a role in the justification of our evaluative judgements even if they are not reasons for those judgements.

6.1

The perceptual model maintains that emotions involve, or at least are analogous to, perceptions of values.¹ On this account, fear involves perceiving something as dangerous, anger involves perceiving something as insulting, shame involves perceiving something as shameful, and so on for other central cases of emotion. Proponents of perceptual models support their views by listing a number of important ways in which emotional reactions are similar to sensory perceptions, where sensory perceptions are taken to be the *paradigm* of perceptual experiences.² Thus, they claim that both

¹ Supporters of perceptual models of the emotions include Elgin (1996): ch. 5 and (2008); Döring (2003); Johnston (2001); de Sousa (1987); Prinz (2004); Roberts (2003); Tappolet (2000 and forthcoming); Zagzebski (2004).

² If we think that sensory perceptions exhaust the class of perceptual experiences, then we will deny that emotions literally involve perceptions of value. But even if we accept this and thus reject a more liberal understanding of perception, we can still call the relevant models of emotions 'perceptual models' if they

emotions and sensory perceptions possess phenomenal properties; both are essentially perspectival; both are 'passive' responses; both are (typically) caused by features of the subject's environment; and both can diverge or come apart from their associated judgements or beliefs, and as a result are not to be thought of as involving judgements or beliefs.³ Instead, perceptual experiences and emotional responses are states which are *weaker* than judgement or belief.

There is a further point of similarity claimed by supporters of the perceptual model, which is that perceptual and emotional experiences are both representational states. For according to a standard position in the philosophy of perception, a perceptual experience is a conscious mental state with intentional or representational content. To say that experiences have representational content is to say that they inform us or tell us about something. On the standard view, perceptual experiences have 'naïve content': they tell us about and thus represent things *in the external world*, rather than items which are intermediate between our experiences and the world, such as sense data.⁴ Thus, as Tim Crane writes, 'An intentional mental state is normally understood... as one which is about, or represents, something in the world' (Crane (2005)). Or as Christopher Peacocke claims: 'A perceptual experience represents the world as being a certain way' (Peacocke (1992): 61). The representational content of a perceptual experience is typically held to be a *proposition*—for instance, the proposition that there is an iMac computer on the desk in front of me—and as a result the content of a perceptual experience is something which has conditions of correctness: my experience represents the world as being a certain way, and my experience is accurate or veridical if the world is indeed how I represent it as being.⁵ So perceptual experiences, like beliefs, have conditions of correctness; and experiences, like beliefs, are accurate when the associated propositions which form their content are true.

But it is a commonplace that emotions are intentional as well: they are, in other words, about or directed at objects and events in the world, which constitute their 'target'. As Sabine Döring puts it: 'you hate your rivals, grieve over your mother's death, or are afraid of the aggressive-looking woman: your rivals, your mother's death and the aggressive-looking woman are the targets of your hatred, grief and fear respectively' (Döring (2003): 221). It is also a commonplace that emotions involve, or are partly constituted by, an *evaluation* or an *appraisal* of the relevant target.⁶ Here is

propose that there are important and interesting similarities between emotions and sensations, and hence (given the assumption) between emotions and perceptions.

³ Perceptions diverge from the relevant perceptual beliefs in the case of known visual illusions; emotions diverge from the relevant evaluative beliefs in the case of 'recalcitrant' emotions—for instance, in cases of fear where someone knows that the object of fear is harmless.

⁴ As a result, representationalists think that perception is direct. In writing this section I have learned much from Kathryn Glier's excellent (2009) paper.

⁵ On the view that the representational content of perceptual experience is a proposition, then perceptual experience counts as a propositional attitude. But this view of content is not essential to the representationalist theory.

⁶ On this view, 'evaluations are not independent of emotions. Feeling fear is an evaluation and not a reaction to an evaluation' (Teroni (2007): 408).

Döring again: 'Hating your rivals implies that you are seeing them as awful people; grieving over your mother's death implies that you are regarding her death as a sad event; being afraid of the aggressive-looking woman implies that you are thinking of her as dangerous' (ibid.). So emotions, like perceptions, can be viewed as having representational content, although in the case of emotions this content is evaluative: in hating your rivals, you represent them as awful; in grieving over your mother's death, you represent this as a sad event; in being afraid of the woman, you represent her as dangerous. So whereas perceptual experiences are about material objects and their sensible properties, emotional experiences are about objects and events and their evaluative properties.

The similarity between emotional and perceptual experience at the representational level enables the former to play a role in the justification of our evaluative beliefs which mirrors the role played by the latter in the justification of our empirical beliefs—or so it is claimed. In particular, perceptual theorists maintain that emotional experiences are akin to perceptual experiences insofar as they constitute *reasons* or *evidence*, at least absent defeaters, for the relevant evaluative beliefs or judgements. Now the idea that perceptual experiences are reasons or evidence for empirical beliefs seems relatively uncontroversial.⁷ After all, we often appeal to our perceptual experiences in order to explain *why* we believe what we do, and in order to *justify* our believing as we do.⁸ As John McDowell writes, 'suppose one asks an ordinary subject why she holds some observational belief, say that an object within her field of view is square. An unsurprising reply might be "Because it looks that way"' (McDowell (1994): 165). Here the subject cites her perceptual experience to explain and to justify her empirical belief. Supporters of the perceptual model claim that emotional experiences enjoy a similar epistemic status. Thus, Catherine Elgin writes that 'Fear is evidence of danger: trust is evidence of reliability' (Elgin (2008): 33). And: 'something's looking blue is ordinarily evidence that it is blue. If the analogy [between perceptions and emotions] holds, emotional deliverances are indicators, but not always accurate indicators of aspects of their objects. Just as my experiencing something as blue is evidence... that it is blue, my being frightened of something is evidence... that it is dangerous (ibid.: 37). In a similar vein, Sabine Döring writes: 'An emotion... resembles a sense-perception in having an intentional content that is representational. As a consequence, an emotion can justify a belief. Like a perception, it can do so by its representational content... justifying the content of that belief' (Döring (2003): 215). And Christine Tappolet states: 'If we accept the claim that emotions have contents of this sort [i.e. they present the world as being in a certain way], then it becomes natural to claim that emotions are

⁷ See, for instance, Brewer: 'Perceptual experiences provide reasons for empirical beliefs' (Brewer (1999): 18).

⁸ This suggests an *internalist* view of justification. At least, it suggests that reasons and evidence are considerations to which we can appeal in order to justify our beliefs, and so are factors which are suitably internal to our perspective. I'll assume, in what follows, that this way of understanding reasons and evidence is correct. It is, of course, compatible with the idea that external factors—such as the reliability of our perceptual mechanisms—can also play a role in the justificatory story.

like sensory perceptions in that they allow us to be aware of certain features of the world, namely values. They do so, at least, under favourable circumstances, that is, when nothing interferes with them' (forthcoming: 7).

An analogy between the epistemic role of perceptual and evaluative experiences is also drawn, in meta-ethics, by Graham Oddie. Oddie maintains that in normal circumstances, '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' (Oddie (2005): 40). He now proposes that '[i]f 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' (ibid.). So Oddie thinks that experiences of value in general constitute defeasible reasons for evaluative beliefs, in much the same way that perceptions constitute defeasible reasons for empirical beliefs. (Oddie differs from supporters of the perceptual model of emotions because he thinks that the relevant experiences of value are *desires*.)

Similar ideas can be found in the psychological literature. Gerald Clore and Karen Gaspar suggest 'that beliefs are adjusted to be compatible with internal evidence in the form of feelings, just as they are adjusted to be compatible with external evidence from perceptual experience . . . Evidence from the sensations of feeling may be treated like sensory evidence from the external environment' (Clore & Gaspar (2000): 25).

There are, therefore, a number of philosophers and psychologists who claim that emotional experience can justify evaluative belief in much the same way that perceptual experience can justify empirical belief. Such theorists maintain that an emotional experience can constitute a reason or evidence for an evaluative belief: that my emotional experience of some object as evaluatively thus-and-so can constitute a reason or evidence for the belief or judgement that the object *is* evaluatively thus-and-so. Moreover, those who favour perceptual accounts of the emotions would seem to be committed to the claim that the same kind of justificatory story can be told in both the perceptual and emotional cases.⁹

In the following section I'll raise some doubts about this view of the epistemic role of emotions, grounded in a significant disanalogy between emotional and perceptual experience.

⁹ Döring, Elgin, and Oddie are explicit about this. For example, Döring (2003) maintains that in certain circumstances a perceptual experience 'entitles' one to take the representational content of experience at face value and form the relevant empirical belief. Here the justificatory story is non-inferential. She thinks something similar applies with respect to emotions: in certain circumstances, an emotional experience likewise entitles a subject to take the representational content of this experience at face value and form the relevant evaluative belief.

6.2

An obvious difference between perceptions and emotions is that at least some emotions can be assessed for rationality as well as accuracy. For instance, it is common to think of 'recalcitrant' emotions as in some sense irrational: it is irrational to be afraid of house spiders that one judges to be harmless, or to feel guilt when one believes that one has done nothing wrong. This marks a contrast with perceptual experiences. Even though perceptual experience can diverge from belief, it is not irrational to perceive the lines in the Müller-Lyer illusion as having different lengths even when one knows that they are the same length. Now one explanation of this difference in assessment is that, intuitively at least, emotions can be responses to features of objects or events which constitute *reasons* for those responses, and hence to which a subject will respond emotionally insofar as they are rational. It makes little sense, however, to talk of features of objects or events as reasons to literally *see* or *hear* something in a particular way. So whereas both perceptual and emotional experiences can (at least according to the perceptual model) constitute reasons for their respective beliefs, supporters of the model should accept that only emotional experiences are themselves responses to reasons.

However, this fact, when allied with a central feature of our emotional lives, casts doubt upon the claim that perceptual and emotional experiences provide reasons or evidence, or at least reasons or evidence of the same *kind*. Consider, to illustrate, my perceptual experience as of a red car parked on the pavement outside my flat. In normal circumstances, and in the absence of epistemic defeaters (e.g. that my eyesight is poor, or that I am given to hallucinations), it is plausible to suppose that my perceptual experience constitutes very good evidence for—indeed, constitutes a conclusive reason for—my perceptual belief. At least, we would find it very strange if, after citing the fact that we can see what looks like a red car, we are then asked for, or feel the need to discover, *further* reasons or evidence for our belief. We might be puzzled as to what more we could do to justify the belief in this instance. If perceptual evidence won't suffice, why should additional evidence, in the form of remembering a red car being there yesterday, or testimony from my partner who also claims to see what looks like a red car? We therefore have a strong intuition that, in the absence of defeaters, perceptual experience suffices for justification.

In contrast, we *often* feel the need to discover reasons or evidence in support of our emotional experience, even in the absence of defeaters. 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, or 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. Or, to take a different example, suppose that I feel guilty,

upon waking, about my behaviour at a colleague's party the previous evening. Again, we might not think that the feeling *by itself* is a conclusive reason for me to believe that I did anything wrong at the party. In such circumstances, I am typically motivated or inclined to find reasons or evidence that bear on the question of whether I am *right* to feel guilty, reasons which confirm or disconfirm my sense that I behaved badly. In cases like these, and in contrast with cases of normal perceptual experience, we do *not* rest content with our emotional appraisal, but instead seek out features and considerations which bear on the correctness of that appraisal. The 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 different from the justificatory story we tell with regard to empirical beliefs.

It seems to me that the above phenomenon is not an accidental feature of our emotional lives, but instead is closely related to what emotions are and how emotions work. For it is often the emotions themselves which facilitate the search for and discovery of reasons and evidence, by modifications of our *attention*. And there are good reasons why this should be so, at least given a plausible understanding of the nature of emotion. To see this, note first that there is considerable evidence that emotion and attention are closely linked. Emotions typically direct and focus our attention on to objects and events that are potentially significant for us. As Aaron Ben-Ze'ev puts it, 'like burglar alarms going off when an intruder appears, emotions signal that something needs attention' (Ben-Ze'ev (2000): 13). The need for direction and focus of attention stems from the fact that as human beings we are presented with vast amounts of information about the state of the world and the state of ourselves, only some of which will be relevant to our concerns. Given that we have limited mental resources, we face a problem of efficiently locating or identifying which information in the environment is potentially important. We therefore have a need to pick out potentially significant stimuli from the mass of irrelevant stimuli that impinge upon our senses. Our emotional systems are thought to have been set up—by evolution and by socialization—to satisfy this need.¹⁰ For instance, a fear response quickly directs and focuses a subject's attention on to a potential threat, and mobilizes a subject's resources to enable her to react appropriately. These include, importantly, behavioural and motivational resources: fear directs and focuses attention, and at the same time primes the subject for the appropriate fight-or-flight response.

¹⁰ See Vuilleumier, Armony, & Dolan: 'from an adaptive-evolutionary perspective, it can be assumed that emotion has a privileged role in biasing the allocation of attentional resources toward events with particular significance for an organism's motivational state'. They continue: 'Given a limited processing capacity, the brain must meet the challenge of detecting and representing only those stimuli most relevant for ongoing behaviour and survival. It is likely that attentional mechanisms evolved to enable the brain to regulate its sensory inputs so as to afford such selective perceptual processing and goal oriented action' (Vuilleumier, Armony, & Dolan (2003): 419).

But emotions such as fear and shame do not just automatically and reflexively direct and focus attention; they also *capture* and *consume* attention. To say that attention is captured and consumed by emotional objects and events is to say that such objects and events hold sway over us, often making it difficult for us to disengage our attention and shift focus elsewhere. (This highlights another difference between emotions and perceptions, since even novel perceptual experiences do not capture or consume our attention for long, at least absent a related emotion.) Emotions such as fear and anger stay with us; they are not simply short-term interruptions to our mental life, but persist and dominate that life. We remain focused on and attentive to danger, infidelity, slights. Now the point of the persistence of attention is not to alert us to potentially significant objects and events in our environment; as we have seen, we are alerted to and focused on the presence of such objects and events automatically and reflexively, and hence prior to the persistence of attention. Instead, we might think that the point (or one of the points) of attentional persistence is to enhance our representation of potentially significant emotional objects and events, by enabling us to discover reasons which bear on the accuracy of our emotional appraisals.¹¹ Again, there seems to be a clear need for emotional governance of our attention in this direction, at least given the widespread and plausible view of 'basic' emotions as fast, frugal, and relatively indiscriminate responses to objects and events of potential significance.¹² There is a clear need, that is, for an evaluative system which acts as a 'check-and-balance' on our relatively indiscriminate emotional-appraisal system, so as to ensure that emotional appearance really does match evaluative reality.

This suggests that the epistemological status of perceptual and emotional experiences, and the respective accounts of the justification of beliefs, are rather different from that suggested by supporters of the perceptual model of emotions. Perhaps it is true, as Döring suggests, that (absent defeating evidence) we automatically take the representational content of perceptual experiences at face value when forming the relevant empirical beliefs. And perhaps it is true that, except in very unusual circumstances, we are entitled to do so. Perceptual experiences, after all, are not plausibly regarded as quick-and-dirty responses to external stimuli. But if emotional responses are often indiscriminate, and if it is a common feature of our emotional lives that we search for reasons that bear on the accuracy of our emotional experiences, then it is implausible to suggest that in normal circumstances we take the representational content of emotional experiences at face value when forming the relevant evaluative beliefs—at least if this suggests that we take such experience at face value in the *absence* of an awareness of those reasons which bear on the accuracy of our emotional responses. Given that emotions capture and consume attention, and given that this facilitates the search for

¹¹ See Ronald de Sousa (1987): 196. For convincing empirical evidence that emotions enhance our representational capacities by capturing and consuming attention, see LeDoux (1996).

¹² For an influential account of basic emotions as fast-and-frugal 'affect program responses', see Ekman (1977): 38–84.

considerations that confirm or disconfirm our initial, relatively indiscriminate emotional appraisal of our circumstances, we might think instead that it is normal for us to endorse the content of our emotional experience only after we have discovered (or on some occasions invented or fabricated) reasons to think that our emotional appearance is veridical. Absent the discovery (or invention) of such reasons, it is by no means obvious that we regard ourselves as entitled to take the content of our emotional experiences at face value. It is by no means obvious, in other words, that we regard our emotional experiences as themselves reasons or evidence for our evaluative beliefs.

At this point the defender of the perceptual model might respond as follows. We do indeed search for reasons in support of our emotional appraisals, and typically do not with respect to our perceptual experiences. But this merely reflects the fact that, as Elgin puts it, our emotional experiences are less reliable than perceptual experiences, and thus 'need more collateral support in order to be [fully] tenable'. On this view, emotional experiences 'start out with less initial tenability' than perceptual experiences. Nevertheless, Elgin claims that 'to have less initial tenability 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' (Elgin (2008): 40). It is therefore compatible with the search for reasons that emotions provide *some*, albeit not conclusive, support for our evaluative beliefs.¹³ Emotions can still constitute reasons for evaluative beliefs, in other words, despite the fact that we are often motivated to look for *additional* evidence when it comes to emotional experience. If so, then the perceptual theorist can maintain that a difference in how attention is governed in perceptual and emotional experience does little to undermine the claim that perceptions and emotions play a similar epistemic role. In the following section, however, I will raise doubts about the plausibility of this weakened version of the perceptual model.

6.3

The fact that emotions, but not perceptions, are themselves responses to reasons might still ground scepticism about the idea that emotional experiences can constitute justifying reasons of *any* strength for evaluative beliefs. To see this, note first 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. For instance, 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. Or, to take another example, the fact that Jones keeps changing his story under questioning, refuses to meet his interlocutor's

eyes, and stands to gain financially from testifying against the defendant are all good reasons to believe that he is untrustworthy as a witness for the prosecution. In each case, the considerations in question are the non-evaluative features of the object or event which seem directly relevant to the correct ascription of the evaluative property; they are precisely the kinds of consideration that we seek out when assessing the accuracy of our initial emotional appraisals. So should we be tempted to add to these considerations the respective facts that we are afraid of the dog or that we feel that Jones is untrustworthy? In other words, is it plausible to maintain that our emotional perceptions of the dog and of Jones are *additional* reasons to believe or judge that the dog is dangerous and that Jones is untrustworthy?

The answer to both of these questions is 'no'. To see why, note again that our emotional appraisals can themselves be responses to the properties or features which constitute genuine reasons for the relevant evaluative judgements (Goldie (2004): 254). That is, our suspicion of Jones (and thus our emotional appraisal of Jones as untrustworthy) can be a response to the fact that Jones keeps changing his story, refuses to meet his interlocutor's eyes, and stands to gain financially from testifying against the defendant. By the same token, our fear of the dog (and thus our emotional perception of the dog as dangerous) can be a response to the fact that it has sharp teeth, a short temper, and is off its lead. However, to repeat a point made earlier, it is not just that our emotions can be responses to these reasons; our emotions *should* be responsive to these kinds of reasons, since these are the emotion-relevant features of the object or event. This highlights the fact that considerations which constitute reasons for evaluative judgements are *equally* reasons for the relevant emotional response. So reasons to think that something is dangerous are equally reasons to fear that thing; reasons to think that one has just been insulted are equally reasons to be angry; reasons to think that one has done something wrong are equally reasons to feel guilt; and similarly for other central cases of emotions. But this suggests that an emotional experience cannot constitute a reason for the relevant evaluative judgement, for it might then appear to be capable of justifying itself. That is, 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.

We might make the same point in a different way, by focusing on the concepts that form the content of the relevant evaluative judgements. A plausible position in meta-ethics is that evaluative concepts like 'dangerous', 'insulting', 'disgusting', 'amusing', and so forth are best understood along *sentimentalist* lines. At least, many prominent philosophers have maintained that these kinds of evaluative concept can only be understood in terms of particular human emotions or sentiments. Sentimentalist accounts propose that we are to understand what it is for something to be dangerous or shameful, let's say, in terms of its 'eliciting or meriting' certain emotional responses, namely fear and shame. Now the most promising versions of sentimentalism about value are second-order accounts, according to which 'to apply a response-dependent

¹³ Elgin is explicit about the fact that emotions might not provide conclusive reasons. See Elgin (2008: 34).

concept Φ to an object X (i.e. to think that X is Φ) is to think it *appropriate* (merited, rational, justified, warranted) to feel an associated sentiment F towards X ' (D'Arms (2005): 3). These are the kinds of accounts favoured by 'sensibility theorists' such as Simon Blackburn, Allan Gibbard, John McDowell, and David Wiggins, all of whom reject dispositionalist theories of evaluative concepts.¹⁴ Sensibility theorists deny, that is, that an evaluative concept Φ is to be understood in terms of the sentiments that people are disposed to feel under 'normal' conditions. Instead, they maintain that we must understand evaluative concepts in terms of appropriate or fitting or merited emotional responses. On this account, then, to judge that X is Φ is to judge that it is rational or appropriate to feel F in response to X ; to say that some object is dangerous is, therefore, to say that it merits fear, or that fear in this instance would be rationally appropriate, correct, warranted, or fitting.

Now sensibility theorists face difficulties in spelling out just what it is for an emotional response to be appropriate, merited, or fitting. Despite this, the approach has a good deal of initial plausibility when it comes to evaluative concepts like 'dangerous', 'insulting', and 'shameful'.¹⁵ If this account is correct, however, then our emotional responses cannot be reasons or evidence for the associated evaluative judgements. My fear of the dog, for instance, cannot be a reason to judge that the dog is dangerous, for then my fear would be a reason to judge that fear in these circumstances is appropriate or merited or fitting—and we have good reason to doubt that fear can justify itself in this way. The very fact that I am afraid of the dog cannot, by itself, be evidence that it is fitting or appropriate to be afraid of the dog. On a sentimentalist account of evaluative concepts, therefore, emotions cannot provide evidence or reasons for evaluative judgements.¹⁶

Note that this form of argument cannot be used to show that perceptions cannot be reasons for perceptual beliefs. If a response-invoking or response-dependent account is to be plausible with respect to sensory or perceptual properties like colours, then in all likelihood it *will* be a dispositionalist account. On this view, we are to understand colour concepts, let us say, in terms of the colours that people are disposed to see under 'normal' conditions. We should not be tempted here to propose that we should understand the concept 'red' in terms of the *rational* appropriateness of what people see, or in terms of responses to *reasons* to see, simply because we do not assess seeing red in terms of its rational appropriateness: to see something as red is not a response to

¹⁴ See Blackburn (1998); Gibbard (1990); McDowell (1998a and b); Wiggins (1987).

¹⁵ See, for instance, the following important papers by D'Arms and Jacobson: (2000a and b), (2003), (2006).

¹⁶ It might be argued that it is the *content* of the emotional experience—viz. the representation of the dog as dangerous—that constitutes the reason, rather than *the fact that I am afraid*. However, the representational content of fear on sentimentalist lines is the proposition that fear of the dog is fitting. Since fear *involves* this representational content, then the content cannot be a reason for the relevant judgement: and hence for fear: if it were, then the representational content of fear would justify fear. But we might think that the representational content of my fear cannot justify my being afraid, any more than my being afraid can justify my being afraid.

reasons. As a result, seeing something as red can *be* a reason to believe that it is red; but since reasons for perceptual beliefs are not, in and of themselves, reasons to perceive things, then seeing something as red does not constitute a reason for itself.

6.4

In the previous section I argued that perceptual and emotional experiences differ in terms of their epistemic value or role. Whilst perceptual experiences can constitute reasons for empirical beliefs, it seems to be the features of an object or event to which emotions respond, rather than emotions themselves, that constitute reasons for evaluative beliefs. One strand of this argument was that emotions, unlike perceptions, focus, capture, and consume attention, the point of which is to alert us to potentially significant objects and events and to facilitate an enhanced appraisal of our initial (and often relatively indiscriminate) evaluative construal: to facilitate, in other words, the search for those features and considerations which bear on the accuracy of this construal. Since this is so, the emotional response cannot be one of *this* class of reasons. The fact that I am afraid cannot itself be a consideration which has a bearing on the question of whether I am right to be afraid; the fact that an object appears dangerous cannot itself be a consideration that has a bearing on whether this appearance is veridical.

Perhaps the defender of the perceptual model will agree that emotions sometimes motivate the search for reasons that bear on the accuracy of the emotions themselves, and hence the search for reasons for evaluative beliefs. They might also agree that in such cases it is doubtful that emotions are themselves to be understood as reasons for evaluative beliefs. Nevertheless, the perceptual theorist might still maintain that emotions can be perfectly good reasons for evaluative beliefs in *other* circumstances, and in particular in those circumstances in which emotions do not motivate the search for reasons. For instance, we might doubt that young children are often, if ever, motivated to seek out reasons that bear on the accuracy of their emotional appraisals. Rather, young children would seem to form evaluative beliefs—such as the belief that they are in peril—directly as a result of experiencing fear. Here it is surely tempting to cite the child's feeling of fear as the reason why she believes that she is in danger.¹⁷ Consider now cases where we do not search for reasons because we *trust* in the reliability of our emotional responses. After all, if emotions can play the role of alerting us to objects and events of potential significance, then emotions can do this more or less reliably. It hardly needs pointing out that our emotions can be trained or calibrated so that they function more efficiently in bringing to our attention important aspects of our environment. Moreover, it seems true that we can learn to associate emotional responses with the relevant values. As a result, and as Elgin claims, we commonly 'take ourselves

¹⁷ I owe this example, and objection, to Tim Bayne.

to be able to reliably correlate emotions with circumstances', at least given 'a sophisticated understanding of when and to what extent they are trustworthy' (Elgin (2008): 37). That is, 'we can often tell which emotional reactions reflect the presence of emotional [evaluative] properties. So under certain recognizable circumstances, an emotional reaction affords epistemic access to such properties' (Elgin (2008): 40–1). Consider, finally, cases where we are not motivated to search for reasons because the features to which our emotions are responses are unlikely to be available to us at the level of conscious thought, and hence unlikely to be identified by us as reasons. I might judge, for instance, that the piece of music is beautiful on the basis of aesthetic feelings, even though I cannot tell—and will be unable to tell even after much contemplation—precisely what it is about the music that generates my emotional response or justifies my judgement. I might, nevertheless, rightly judge that the music is beautiful on the basis of my emotional response. In all of these cases, it seems to be our emotional responses themselves that play the role of justifying reasons with respect to our evaluative judgements or beliefs.

I agree that there are cases where we are not motivated to search for the reasons that bear on the accuracy of our emotional experiences, and not just because we have already identified such reasons. And I agree that in certain cases people *take* their emotional responses to be reasons for evaluative beliefs. But there is still room to ask whether people are right to do so. On the one hand, if a person's emotional response is an unreliable 'tracker' of reasons, then such a response cannot be a justifying reason for the relevant belief—even though the person might take their response to be a reason. At best, such experiences can be mere causes of, or motivating reasons for, evaluative beliefs. Indeed, we might think that this is the most plausible interpretation of the situation where a child believes that he is in danger because he feels afraid, given that fear in young children is typically unreliably correlated with danger. On the other hand, even if we are aware that our emotional experiences in certain circumstances are reliably correlated with values, it is not obvious that such experiences are anything more than *proxies* for the underlying reasons: emotions can be useful substitutes for reasons in those circumstances where we cannot access the reasons that our emotions reliably track. As a result, it can sometimes be helpful (and natural) for us to treat emotional responses *as if* they were reasons; but this should not blind us to the fact that even in these circumstances, it is the reasons that emotions track, rather than the emotions themselves, that are doing the genuine justificatory work.

For an argument in support of this picture of emotional responses as mere proxies, consider what happens when one becomes *aware* of the reasons that one's emotional response tracks. In such a situation, it seems to me that any justificatory power that the emotional response has with respect to the relevant evaluative belief *disappears*. This is not the claim that the putative justifying power of the emotional experience is trumped by better reasons if we become aware of these. Rather, the point is that our emotional response to such features cannot be an *additional* justifying reason for evaluative belief in these circumstances, since this would involve 'double counting': the emotion-relevant

features of the object or event that constitute reasons would enter the justificatory story directly *and* via our emotional response. That is, if we have already taken the relevant features into account as considerations which justify our evaluative belief, we are debarred from taking these features into account again by treating our emotional response as an additional reason for the evaluative belief. Since we should avoid double counting, we should reject the idea that emotional experience retains its capacity to justify when we are aware of the reasons that such experience reliably tracks.¹⁸ But this just means that emotional experience isn't a genuine reason after all, on the assumption that genuine reasons do not lose their justifying power when we become aware of other reasons for the same belief. Emotional experience is, therefore, at best a proxy for genuine reasons: useful in those cases where genuine reasons are unavailable to us at the reflective level or in situations where a search for such reasons would be inappropriate, but not in itself reason or evidence for evaluative belief or judgement. We can therefore acknowledge the important role that emotional experience can play in the justification of our evaluative beliefs—either by motivating the search for reasons, or by constituting proxies for such reasons—without succumbing to the inclination to conflate a proxy with the genuine article.

6.5

I have argued that there are significant differences between emotions and perceptions at the epistemic level. In particular, I have argued that emotions, unlike perceptions, often motivate the search for reasons which bear on their own accuracy, and hence on the correctness of the associated judgement. I have pointed out that there is a clear need for such search and discovery in the case of emotional but not perceptual experience, given that a central class of emotions are plausibly regarded as quick-and-dirty responses to objects and events of potential significance. And I have claimed that even when emotions are reliable trackers of value, emotional experience, unlike perceptual experience, is at best a proxy for genuine justifying reasons.

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

¹⁸ We can make the same point with regard to belief. If you believe that *p* on the basis of evidence, it would be a mistake to take your believing as you do to be an *additional* piece of evidence in favour of *p*. As Thomas Kelly writes, 'The fact that you believe as you do is the *result* of your assessment of the probative force of the first-order evidence: it is not one more piece of evidence to be placed alongside the rest. That is, you do not treat the fact that you believe [*p*] as a further reason to believe that [*p*], above and beyond the first-order considerations that you take to rationalize your belief.' Kelly thinks that treating the fact that one believes that *p* as a further reason is to engage in illicit double counting (Kelly (2005): 167–96).

evidence for evaluative judgement or belief would appear to be more damaging. In either case, defenders of the perceptual model owe us an explanation as to why the differences I've highlighted between perceptual and emotional experiences don't, ultimately, make a difference to their case.¹⁹

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