

Emotional Justification

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Theories of emotional justification investigate the conditions under which emotions are epistemically justified or unjustified. I make three contributions to this research program. First, I show that we can generalize some familiar epistemological concepts and distinctions to emotional experiences. Second, I use these concepts and distinctions to display the limits of the ‘simple view’ of emotional justification. On this approach, the justification of emotions stems only from the contents of the mental states they are based on, also known as their cognitive bases. The simple view faces the ‘gap problem’: If cognitive bases and emotions (re)present their objects and properties in different ways, then cognitive bases are not sufficient to justify emotions. Third, I offer a novel solution to the gap problem based on emotional dispositions. This solution (1) draws a line between the justification of basic and non-basic emotions, (2) preserves a broadly cognitivist view of emotions, (3) avoids a form of value skepticism that threatens inferentialist views of emotional justification, and (4) sheds new light on the structure of our epistemic access to evaluative properties.

If Pat’s fear that terrorists will attack New York City is based on CIA intelligence reports, her fear is justified. If Peter is jealous of his wife on the basis of a mere hunch, his jealousy is unjustified. If Youna has heard from a reliable witness that her father is in better health, she is justified in being elated (e.g., Deonna and Teroni 2012; Goldie 2004; Greenspan 1988; Huemer 2001; Mulligan 1998; Pelsner 2014; Salmela 2006). Emotions can be epistemically justified or unjustified. A theory of emotional justification seeks to spell out the conditions under which emotions are epistemically justified or unjustified.

Most recent work on the epistemology of emotions has rather focused on their contribution to the justification of evaluative judgments (e.g., Brady 2013; Brogaard and Chudnoff 2016; Brun *et al.* 2008; Döring 2003). This is unfortunate, however, because emotional justification raises other issues of broader significance to epistemology. As an illustration, suppose that emotions can be immediately justified by mental states devoid of evaluative content. If this view is correct, we should revise the common idea that immediate justification requires that the representational content of the *justifier* mental state be identical to the content of the *justified* mental state. This paper will cast doubt on this assumption.¹

I shall make three contributions to the theory of emotional justification.

¹ This ‘sameness of content assumption’ is pervasive in two recent debates: the debate between ‘liberal’ and ‘austere’ theories of perceptual experience and the debate on phenomenal conservatism. See the essays in Hawley and Macpherson (2011) and Tucker (2013). Millar (2000) and Silins (2013) have criticized this assumption.

1. There is some lack of clarity on what emotion theorists mean by epistemic justification. I will argue that we can fruitfully extend some familiar epistemological notions to the emotions: the concept of justification as epistemic permissibility, the contrast between propositional and doxastic justification, and the distinction between immediate and mediate justification.

2. The ‘simple view’ of emotional justification holds that the justification of emotions supervenes on the content of the mental states they are based on, also known as their ‘cognitive bases’ (e.g., Deonna and Teroni 2012; Goldie 2004; Mulligan 1998). I shall use the epistemological distinctions introduced above to display some limitations of the simple view and formulate the ‘gap problem’. The gap problem is roughly this: If there is a difference in the ways cognitive bases and emotions (re)present objects and properties, then cognitive bases are not sufficient to justify emotional responses.²

3. I will propose a solution to the gap problem in terms of emotional dispositions (also called ‘sentiments’). I will defend this view in two steps. First, emotional dispositions enable us to make room for immediate emotional justification while sticking to a broadly cognitivist view of emotions. Second, the resulting view sheds new light on the structure of our epistemic access to evaluative properties.

The paper has six sections. I start with some remarks on the role of emotions in our mental economy (Section 1) and then clarify the concept of epistemic justification (Section 2). In Section 3, I introduce the ‘simple view’ of emotional justification and formulate the gap problem. Subsequently, I examine some possible solutions to the gap problem and find them wanting (Section 4). In Section 5, I show how emotional dispositions enable us to solve the gap problem and shed new light on the structure of our epistemic access to evaluative properties. I conclude with objections and replies (Section 6).

1. Emotions in Our Mental Life

It is difficult to provide uncontroversial criteria to determine whether a mental episode is an emotion. I shall circumvent this problem by relying on paradigmatic examples of emotions. These include admiration, amusement, anger, disgust, embarrassment, envy, fear, jealousy, joy, pride, and shame. The discussion will focus on *conscious* tokens of these emotions.

There are different theories of emotions. I will presuppose a *broadly* cognitivist conception. This influential view conceives of emotions as *intentional* psychological episodes that provide *epistemic access* to the evaluative properties of their intentional objects. This conception is the conjunction of two claims:

Intentionality: Emotions are *about* objects, situations, events or states of affairs. For simplicity’s sake, we can refer to these entities as the ‘intentional objects’ of emotions.³

² I will presuppose a representational theory of cognitive bases. This is controversial, though. As we shall see, emotions can be based on perceptual experiences, which some philosophers analyze as devoid of representational content (e.g., Brewer 2011; Campbell 2002). Still, my arguments can be easily generalized to non-representational conceptions of cognitive bases.

³ My use of ‘intentional object’ is intended to be ontologically neutral. Thus, it does not require any commitment to non-existent objects.

To illustrate, if Peter is angry with Pat, the intentional object of Peter's anger is Pat. If a rat is afraid of the imminent electroshock, the intentional object of the rat's fear is the electroshock.

Epistemic Access: Emotions provide epistemic access to the evaluative properties of their intentional objects. Following a long tradition, we may term these evaluative properties 'formal objects' (e.g., De Sousa 1987; Kenny 1963; Teroni 2007).⁴

As an illustration, the formal object of anger is the offensive, the formal object of amusement is the funny, the formal object of fear is the dangerous, the formal object of grief is loss, the formal object of pride is achievement by oneself or someone in a suitable relation to oneself, and so on.⁵

A consequence of the intentionality and epistemic access claims is that emotions can be assessed as correct or incorrect. An emotion *E* is correct if and only if its intentional object, *o*, exemplifies the formal object that *E* (re)presents *o* as having. It is incorrect otherwise.

There are different ways of developing the cognitivist view. One may hold that emotions are mental episodes analogous to judgments (e.g., Nussbaum 2001; Solomon 1988). Alternatively, one may compare emotions to perceptual experiences that represent objects under evaluative modes of presentation (e.g., Brogaard and Chudnoff 2016; De Sousa 2004; Goldie 2000, 2004; Döring 2003, 2007; McDowell 1985; Roberts 2003; Tappolet 2011; Zagzebski 2003).⁶ More recently, Deonna and Teroni (2012, 2014, 2015) have defended the claim that emotions are *sui generis* mental attitudes that have correctness conditions but do not explicitly represent their formal objects. Since my arguments apply to any of these views, I will not commit myself to any specific cognitivist theory.⁷

Most cognitivists recognize that emotions can stand in two different dependency relations with other mental states or episodes.

First, emotions inherit their intentional objects from other mental states or episodes, also known as 'cognitive bases'. If Peter is afraid at the sight of the dog, his fear of the dog inherits its intentional object from his *visual experience* of the dog. Emotions can also inherit their intentional objects from thoughts or beliefs. Thus, Mary can be excited at the thought of running for office (e.g., Brogaard and Chudnoff 2016; Deonna and Teroni 2012, 2014; Mulligan 1998; Oliver-Skuse 2016; Wedgwood

⁴ Some theorists refer to formal objects as 'core relational themes' (Prinz 2004) or 'emotion-proper properties' (Goldie 2004).

⁵ This list of formal objects is not entirely uncontroversial. For instance, one might hold that the formal object of fear is not the dangerous but the fearsome (e.g., De Sousa 1987; Salmela 2006). I will take no sides in this dispute because my arguments do not require a specific account of formal objects.

⁶ Johnston's (2001) view is often listed as a perceptual theory (e.g., Brady 2010, 2013). Nevertheless, Johnston (2001: 182 n 1) makes it clear that he is interested in a primitive form of affective relation to the world that is prior to the emotions. Prinz (2004) is also classified as a perceptual theorist (e.g., Brogaard and Chudnoff 2016). In my view, his account is best understood as an elaboration of James/Lange's *feeling* theory. The emotion is a feeling of bodily changes that have the function of carrying information of the instantiation of a core relational theme. I shall not discuss any of these theories here. But see footnote 29 for a brief comparison of my view with Prinz's.

⁷ Emotion theorists often use 'cognitivism' to refer to *judgment* accounts of emotions. My label is closer to the familiar view in meta-ethics according to which evaluative statements express truth-apt propositions.

2001). In sum, emotions require *cognitive bases*. Cognitive bases are the *subject-matter givers* of emotions.

Second, emotions are psychological episodes for which we can have or lack reasons (e.g., Brady 2013; Deonna and Teroni 2012; Goldie 2004; Greenspan 1988; Mulligan 1998; Salmela 2006). Indeed, it is often meaningful to ask ‘why’-questions in relation to the emotions. The answers to those questions do not always convey merely causal explanations (Deonna and Teroni 2012; Goldie 2004; Mulligan 1998). If asked: ‘Why are you afraid?’, a subject could naturally respond: ‘Because that dog has big teeth and is moving erratically’. This answer conveys an epistemic reason for fear.

A natural assumption is that subjects apprehend the epistemic reasons for their emotions via the cognitive bases of those emotions. If I am afraid at the sight of the dog, my visual experience of the dog can deliver the epistemic reason for fear: I visually represent the dog as having big teeth and moving erratically. It is therefore plausible to hold that cognitive bases play two roles at once: they are both *subject-matter givers* and *reason givers*.

Some philosophers have been attracted by a more radical claim. On their view, the epistemic justification of emotions supervenes on the contents of their cognitive bases alone (e.g., Deonna and Teroni 2012; Goldie 2004; Mulligan 1998). Let us term this the ‘simple view’ of emotional justification. I shall suggest that emotional justification has a more complex justificatory structure. Before I defend this claim, we need to get a better understanding of the concept of epistemic justification.

2. Correctness and Justification

Suppose that Peter has made a sexist joke in Julia’s presence. Unfortunately, you could not help laughing at the joke. Was your amusement appropriate? The answer to this question will depend on what is meant by ‘appropriate’. You might think that it was *morally bad* to be amused by the joke because it is plainly wrong to laugh at sexist jokes. Additionally, you might think that it was *prudentially bad* to be amused by the joke because Julia is your boss and she might retaliate. All these considerations notwithstanding, you might still think that the joke was *really* funny. Barring extreme forms of subjectivism about values, we could distinguish two different kinds of assessment. It is one thing to ask whether *feeling* an emotion is morally or prudentially appropriate; it is quite another thing to ask whether the emotion itself *fits* its intentional object (e.g., D’Arms and Jacobson 2000; McDowell 1987; Salmela 2006; Tappolet 2011; Wedgwood 2001). In what follows, when I speak of correctness, I will have in mind the question whether the emotion fits its intentional object.

Most discussions of emotional justification have focused on their correctness, which is roughly analogous to truth or accuracy. There is however another assessment dimension that deserves to be further scrutinized: epistemic justification. This dimension becomes apparent when we take seriously the idea that emotions are based on other mental states or episodes (Section 1). On this view, an emotion can be correct but based on bad reasons or incorrect but based on good reasons. In this respect, emotions bear some similarities to beliefs. This parallelism suggests that the theory of emotional justification can benefit from general epistemology. In what follows, I show how we can generalize some familiar epistemological concepts and distinctions to the emotions.

2.1. Justification as Epistemic Permissibility

There is no single use of the word ‘justification’ in general epistemology. Moreover, there is a lively debate between internalist and externalist accounts of epistemic justification. Thus, it is difficult to talk about emotional justification without taking on controversial commitments. I do not have an antidote for this problem. Nevertheless, we can make headway if we provide an approximate paraphrase of the technical adjective ‘justified’. The dominant view holds that a belief *B* is justified for an agent, *S*, if and only if forming *B* is *permitted* from an epistemic point of view (e.g., Goldman 1986: 59; Littlejohn 2012: 8; Pollock and Cruz 1999: 123; Silva 2017; Wedgwood 2012: 274). We can drop the qualification ‘from an epistemic point of view’ for ease of exposition. Thus, we have a characterization of epistemic justification as permissibility:

Epistemic Justification as Permissibility

An agent, *S*, is justified to believe that *p* if and only if *S* is permitted to believe that *p* (= *S* is not required not to believe that *p*).

An agent, *S*, is justified to have an emotion *E* if and only if *S* is permitted to have *E* (= *S* is not required not to have *E*).

This characterization accommodates the intuition that ‘justified’ denotes a property other than correctness, truth or accuracy. Consider the internalist intuition that one is permitted to take the content of one’s perceptual experiences at face value if one is not aware of any defeater. Thus, one can be epistemically justified in believing that *p* even though one’s experience as of *p* is illusory or hallucinatory (e.g., Huemer 2001; Pollock and Cruz 1999; Pryor 2000, 2005). Crucially, we can defend the same conclusion without presupposing an internalist picture. Suppose that you think that only true propositions can be reasons. Still, having a veridical experience as of *p* may be insufficient for an agent to be justified in believing *p*. Imagine that our agent has a veridical visual experience as of *p* but also thinks that the illumination conditions are abnormal. In this case, our agent ought to check before she forms the corresponding belief. Before she performs the relevant check, she is not permitted to believe that *p*.

Let us generalize these remarks to the emotions. Suppose that Youna has heard from a reliable witness that her father is in better health. In this case, Youna is permitted to be elated. Crucially, some might want to hold that Youna is still justified in being elated even if the witness happens to be wrong. After all, one might reasonably hold that Youna is permitted to trust testimony in the absence of defeaters. Suppose now that Carlos is afraid of a small spider in the bathroom. Yet, his therapist has told him that most spiders in New York City are inoffensive. Remembering this piece of advice, Carlos tells himself: ‘I should not be afraid of that spider’. Yet, the mantra does not work and he keeps shaking. Unbeknownst to Carlos, however, the spider is venomous. In this case, Carlos’ fear of the small spider is correct but unjustified.

Recall that a theory of emotional justification should spell out the conditions under which an emotion is justified. Our characterization provides a useful tool to evaluate accounts of emotional justification. For any candidate condition, *C*, we can ask: Is *C* necessary for an agent to be permitted to have an emotion *E*? Is *C* sufficient for an agent to

be permitted to have an emotion *E*? These questions will prove useful when we examine the simple view of emotional justification (Section 3).

2.2. Propositional vs. Attitudinal Justification

The analogy between the epistemic roles of beliefs and emotions suggests that emotion theorists should exploit the distinction between propositional and doxastic justification. In the case of belief, one can ask whether the *propositional content* of a potential belief is justified for an agent (propositional justification) or whether an agent's *belief* is *well founded* (doxastic justification). Propositional justification concerns what one's evidence or reasons support; one's belief is doxastically justified if it is based on that evidence or reasons in the right way. This distinction is important because a proposition *p* can be justified for an agent, *S*, even though *S* formed no belief that *p*. Additionally, *p* can be justified for an agent, *S*, even though *S* formed the corresponding belief via a deviant causal chain or on bad reasons (e.g., Firth 1978; Pollock and Cruz 1999; Turri 2010).⁸

Suppose that emotions represent their intentional objects as having some evaluative properties. In this framework, a theory of propositional justification should elucidate the conditions under which a potential emotional response with such and such content would be justified. Crucially, this account will be neutral on whether the subject responds emotionally to the intentional object. Suppose that Mary has offended Peter. However, Peter has just been notified that his lottery ticket is the winner. Being overwhelmed with joy, Peter cannot be angry with Mary. Still, anger at Mary is propositionally justified for Peter.

Let us introduce the phrase 'attitudinal justification' as a generic term covering doxastic justification and its counterpart for mental states or episodes other than belief. A theory of doxastic justification seeks to elucidate the conditions that the *fixation* of belief should satisfy for the resulting belief to be well founded. A theory of doxastic justification should exclude such things as deviant causes. Similarly, a theory of attitudinal justification for the emotions should elucidate the conditions that the *appraisals* involved in emotions should satisfy to produce well-founded emotional responses.⁹

2.3. Immediate vs. Mediate Justification

Suppose that you are attracted by a moderately foundationalist epistemology. On this view, there is a difference between basic and non-basic beliefs (in the case of doxastic justification) and basic and non-basic propositions (in the case of propositional justification). A central task for a moderately foundationalist epistemologist is to draw these distinctions in a principled way.

⁸ It is an open question whether propositional justification is more fundamental than doxastic justification, or vice versa. I am inclined to favor the claim that doxastic justification is the more fundamental concept. I cannot defend this claim here. Nevertheless, I will exploit a parallel view for emotional justification in my solution to the 'gap problem'. See Section 5 and footnote 26.

⁹ If one holds that emotions do not explicitly represent their formal objects, one should formulate propositional justification in a slightly different way. An account of the propositional justification of emotions should spell out the conditions under which a *would-be* emotion with such and such correctness conditions is permitted. In this case, the proposition in the phrase 'propositional justification' should be taken as describing those correctness conditions from an external perspective that does not capture how those correctness conditions figure in the *would-be* emotion. See Roberts (2003), for this 'external' use of propositions in theorizing on the emotions.

Let us focus on propositional justification. The justification of some propositions requires antecedent justification to believe other propositions. If you look at the gas gauge of your car, you may have justification to believe that your car is out of gas. Yet, this justification depends on your having antecedent justification to believe another proposition: that the gas gauge of your car reads 'empty' (Pryor 2005: 182). We can therefore say that the proposition that the car is out of gas is *mediately* justified for you. If the justification of this proposition did not depend on your justification to believe other propositions, it would be *immediately* justified for you. Here is a plausible example of immediate justification: If you have an experience as of a light in front of you, the proposition that there is a light in front of you is justified independently of whether other beliefs or propositions are also justified for you (Pryor 2000: 537).

Some philosophers have rejected the idea of immediate justification (e.g., Wright 2007). It is not my aim to respond to those arguments but rather to use the concept of immediate justification to assess some existing theories of emotional justification.

A moment's reflection suggests that most emotions cannot be immediately justified. Consider pride, jealousy, guilt, and shame. These emotions rely on moral and cultural presuppositions. Moreover, they involve a rather sophisticated self-concept. Thus, we have *prima facie* reasons to believe that their justification always is mediate. Suppose that I am proud of the Lamborghini that is parked in front of my house. If my pride is justified, then the proposition <The Lamborghini that is parked in front of my house enables me to be seen in a good light by people I care about> is justified for me (cf. Roberts 2003: 275). Now, the justification of this proposition requires antecedent justification to believe at least four other propositions: (1) <There is a Lamborghini parked in front of my house>, (2) <I own the Lamborghini that is parked in front of my house>, (3) <Owning a Lamborghini is an achievement>, and (4) <Achievements enable their agents to be seen in a good light by people they care about>. Thus, it is reasonable to count this example as a case of mediate justification. The analysis easily generalizes to other sophisticated emotions like jealousy, guilt, and shame.

Is there immediate emotional justification? The most plausible candidates for immediate emotional justification are psychologists' *basic emotions*. These are evolutionarily ancient emotions that promote physical survival. They are fast, short-term, and involve stereotypical responses. They are also processed in subcortical areas that are informationally encapsulated. Examples include (basic forms of) fear, anger, disgust, joy, and sadness (e.g., Ekman 1992; LeDoux 1996; Griffiths 1997).¹⁰

If we follow the model of perception, it is tempting to think that even these emotions cannot be immediately justified. Consider a variation of Carlos' fear of the spider in the bathroom. In this case, he ignores the fact that most spiders in New York City are inoffensive. If Carlos' fear is justified, the proposition <the spider that is in the bathroom is dangerous> is justified for him. Now, the justification of this proposition requires antecedent justification to believe at least three other propositions: (1) <The animal I am looking at is a spider>, (2) <That spider is venomous>, and (3) <Venomous animals are dangerous>. The structure of this example is analogous to the structure of the gas gauge

¹⁰ Some psychologists have tried to explain *all* emotions in terms of basic emotions. My project is more modest. I wish to ask whether these basic emotions are plausible candidates for immediate justification. As we shall see, this is the most promising stance for defenders of the simple view of emotional justification.

example above. Thus, if you have the intuition that the latter is a case of mediate justification, you should also agree that Carlos' fear is a case of mediate justification.

This cursory analysis suggests that the justification of *any* emotion will be a rather complex matter. Nevertheless, there is a way of drawing a distinction between mediate and immediate emotional justification. On this approach, the distinction is comparative. Intuitively, some propositions are *more* mediately justified than the others. My pride in the Lamborghini that is parked in front of my house is *more* mediately justified than Carlos' fear of the spider in the bathroom. The reason is straightforward. The justification of my pride in the Lamborghini draws on more epistemic sources than Carlos' fear of the spider. My pride draws on perceptual recognition, several cultural presuppositions transmitted by testimony, and a self-ascription. By contrast, one might plausibly hold that Carlos' fear only draws on perceptual recognition. And this is indirectly supported by the claim that basic emotions are processed in subcortical areas and are informationally encapsulated.

In what follows, I will explore the claim whether basic emotions can be immediately justified in the relative sense.¹¹ Our question is whether basic emotions can borrow their justification from a single epistemic source, as the spider example suggests. As we shall see, this is the most promising interpretation of the simple view of emotional justification.¹²

3. The Simple View

We have seen that emotions bear two kinds of relations to other mental states or episodes: they have subject-matter givers and reason givers (Section 1). This suggests a simple view of emotional justification. Cognitive bases provide the subject matter of emotions. When they do so, they also provide reasons that confer justification on those emotions. Thus, emotions borrow their justification from the contents of their cognitive bases alone. Let us dub this 'the simple view' of emotional justification.

Peter Goldie endorses the simple view:

[A]n emotional experience typically *seems* to one to be reasonable or justified. But what makes it, in fact, justified? [A]n emotion, if it is, in fact, justified, will be justified by something else external to the emotion itself and the perception: it will be justified by reasons [...]. Thus the fact that the meat is maggot infested is a reason that justifies [...] your feeling of disgust (Goldie 2004: 97–8).

In the same text, Goldie excludes other elements from the factors that contribute to the justification of disgust. Thus, on Goldie's view, the justification of disgust at the meat supervenes on the subject's (awareness of) the fact that the meat is maggot infested.

¹¹ Hereafter, I drop the adjective 'relative'.

¹² It might be objected that the epistemological parallelism between emotions and beliefs breaks down when we consider the role of proportionality in emotions. Consider an example from Roberts (2003: 317): "Al is angry at Bud for putting a fingerprint on the hood of his 1924 Rolls Royce. The intensity of his anger is incommensurate with the importance of the offense. (He sees the offense as more important than it is)". On this view, emotions can be assessed for proportionality, while beliefs cannot.

I do not need to hold that the analogy between the epistemic roles of emotions and beliefs is perfect in order to vindicate the present approach. Nevertheless, it is not clear that proportionality plays no role in the justification of beliefs. Indeed, one might require that one's degree of belief in *p* be proportional to one's evidence in favor of *p* (Wedgwood Ms.).

In more recent work, Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni (D&T) have defended a similar claim. They write:

An emotion is justified if, and only if, in the situation in which the subject finds herself, the properties she is (or seems to be) aware of and on which her emotion is based constitute (or would constitute) an exemplification of the evaluative property that features in the correctness conditions of the emotion she undergoes (Deonna and Teroni 2012: 97).

D&T illustrate their view with a concrete example:

Suppose that a dog with big teeth that is behaving in an impulsive way constitutes, given the circumstances in which the subject finds herself, a danger. The idea is that her fear is justified if it is based on her awareness of this dog, its big teeth and impulsive behavior (Deonna and Teroni 2012: 97).

There is a difference between Goldie's and D&T's accounts. Whereas Goldie spells out emotional justification in terms of facts, D&T add the qualifications 'seems to be aware' and 'would constitute', which make room for justified emotions based on false or inaccurate cognitive bases. Given that my arguments are neutral on these two options, I propose to drop D&T's qualifications. The reader is invited to adjust my arguments to their preferred account.¹³

Let us use the distinctions from the previous section to interpret the simple view.

First, neither Goldie nor D&T make any claim about the way emotions are formed on the basis of their cognitive bases. Thus, their accounts are most plausibly interpreted as contributions to a theory of propositional justification.

Second, both Goldie and D&T formulate their views in relation to *any* emotion. This is problematic. It seems natural to hold that only a few emotions can be justified on the sole basis of the contents of their cognitive bases. This is indirectly confirmed by the example of pride from Section 2.3 and the examples they give, which concern basic emotions. Goldie thinks that one's disgust at the meat depends on one's justification for the proposition that the meat is maggot infested *and nothing else*.¹⁴ Thus, his view is best cashed out as an account of immediate emotional justification. D&T submit that one's fear of the dog depends on one's justification for the proposition that the dog has big teeth and impulsive behavior *and nothing else*.¹⁵ Thus, their view is best cashed out as an account of immediate emotional justification. Other cases are likely to display a more complex justificatory structure. Culturally dependent emotions and emotions that emerge from complex patterns of reasoning will introduce other sources of justification

¹³ Some emotions are factive. Examples include regretting that *p*, being glad that *p*, and being happy that *p*. Some have argued that these emotions entail knowledge that *p* (Gordon 1987: 26), while others have suggested that they only require that the subject believes that she knows that *p* (Roberts 2003: 94). Depending on one's views on the matter, one should amend the simple view accordingly. I shall bracket factive emotions.

¹⁴ For Goldie, the proposition that the meat is maggot infested is justified for me because it is a *fact* that the meat is maggot infested.

¹⁵ D&T do not spell out the conditions under which the proposition that the dog has big teeth and impulsive behavior is justified for me. Presumably, they want their view to be compatible with many epistemological accounts.

(Section 2.3). Hence, we should think of the simple view as an account of *immediate* emotional justification.

Third, neither Goldie nor D&T explain what they mean by epistemic justification. Given that justification has been *widely* cashed out in terms of permissibility, I propose to assess their views in those terms. Does the simple view provide necessary and sufficient conditions for propositional-immediate emotional justification understood as epistemic permissibility?¹⁶

If we use D&T's account as a template, we can rephrase the simple view as the conjunction of a necessity and a sufficiency claim:

Necessity Claim

If a subject's emotion is immediately justified, the subject is aware of the properties that constitute an exemplification of the formal object of the emotion.

Sufficiency Claim

If a subject is aware of the properties that constitute an exemplification of the formal object of the emotion, the subject's emotion is immediately justified.

Let us start with the necessity claim. It is unclear whether Goldie and D&T have provided an *exhaustive* characterization of the properties that constitute the formal objects of disgust and fear respectively. Suppose that basic forms of disgust track poisonous and infected food. Thus, the property of being maggot infested is not sufficient to constitute the property of being disgusting. After all, the meat is disgusting *relative to* human beings but not to vultures. Therefore, there is some pressure to include some properties of human beings into the properties that constitute the disgusting character of a maggot-infested piece of meat. D&T are more careful than Goldie. They suggest that the dangerousness of a dog in a situation is also constituted by the fact that "the subject is made of flesh and blood as well as some spatial and other relations between her and the animal" (Deonna and Teroni 2012: 95).¹⁷ But this raises a problem. If we include relational properties into the properties that constitute formal objects, the simple view seems to predict that disgust and fear are almost never justified. After all, we are not typically aware of these relational properties when we experience disgust or fear.¹⁸

There are some ways of circumventing this problem. One might follow Setiya (2012: 40ff.) and stipulate that the agent only needs to have some *evidence* of the instantiation of the properties that constitute the corresponding formal object. Another option would be to hypothesize that we are unconsciously aware of things as standing in relevant relations to us and that this unconscious awareness is all we need for immediate emotional justification. Alternatively, one might claim that a subject does not need to be aware of *all* the properties that constitute danger for her fear to be justified. This solution seems to

¹⁶ Hereafter, when I speak about an emotion being justified, I refer to propositional-immediate justification.

¹⁷ "[W]e do not suggest that the supervenience base for evaluative properties only comprises monadic properties of the relevant object. The supervenience base will typically comprise relational properties of this object as well as some properties of the subject undergoing the emotion" (Deonna and Teroni 2012: 103 n 4).

¹⁸ See also McGrath (forthcoming) for additional worries. She presents her objections to Setiya's (2012) inferential theory of moral knowledge.

be implicit in D&T's formulation. They could reply that some of these constitutive properties are best understood as implicit parameters of the subject's situation.

Let us assume that one of these solutions could be worked out. Hence, we can rather focus on the sufficiency claim: Is it true that a subject's awareness of the properties that constitute an exemplification of the formal object of her emotion is sufficient for immediate justification of that emotion? My answer is no. The sufficiency claim leads to the 'gap problem'. On the plausible assumption that there is a difference in the ways cognitive bases represent objects and their properties and the ways emotions (re)present evaluative properties, it follows that the cognitive bases of emotions are not sufficient to justify emotional responses. To understand this problem, we need a working characterization of the relation between non-evaluative and evaluative properties and non-evaluative and evaluative representational contents.

There are *reductive* and *non-reductive* conceptions of the relation between non-evaluative properties (N-properties) and evaluative properties (E-properties):

Non-Reductive Conceptions. On these views, N-properties are different from E-properties. A natural way of developing this idea is to hold that E-properties are higher-order properties of N-properties (e.g., Oddie 2005).

Reductive Conceptions. On these views, E-properties are identical to N-properties.

Goldie is not explicit on which ontological conception he endorses. D&T are attracted by a reductive view:

[I]f danger is constituted by the instantiation of some non-evaluative properties, *there is no further fact of the matter, nothing more to a specific danger than the instantiation of what makes it a danger* [...]. A specific instance of danger, loss, or offensiveness is *not a further property alongside those properties that constitute it* (Dancy 1993: 75) (Deonna and Teroni 2012: 97; emphasis mine).

The arguments to follow generalize to both reductive and non-reductive views. Moreover, they can be applied to various conceptions of the relation between N-properties and E-properties. Yet, we will gain in clarity if we focus on a single type of view. I propose to focus on reductive accounts that exploit the constitution relation.

Anyone who endorses a reductive account of evaluative properties should accommodate a platitude. Even if an E-property is identical to an N-property, one can run a Moorean Open Question argument for E and N: Is it true that E is N? (Moore 1903). It is unclear whether this argument enables us to draw any metaphysical conclusions about the relation between E-properties and N-properties. Yet, this argument has an epistemic consequence: If it makes sense to run a Moorean Open Question argument for E and N, it follows that the sentence 'E is N' is informative. In the Fregean tradition (Frege 1892), if an informative identity is flanked by two co-extensional expressions, the extensions of these expressions are presented under different modes of presentation (MOPs).

The Moore-Frege insight strongly suggests that one's awareness of the instantiation of the N-properties that constitute an exemplification of the formal object of a given emotion *E* is not sufficient to confer immediate propositional justification on *E*.

Let us start with an example from a different domain. Intuitively, water is constituted by Hydrogen and Oxygen. Still, being aware that *this* stuff is H₂O is not sufficient for an agent to be *permitted* to conclude that *this* stuff is water. If our agent were to draw that conclusion, she would be jumping to conclusions. Although water is *in fact* H₂O, it is

unreasonable for an agent to conclude that this stuff is water on the sole basis of her awareness that this stuff is H₂O. If an agent is aware that this stuff is H₂O but ignores that H₂O is water, the rational thing for her to do is to suspend judgment when she is presented with the content expressed by ‘This is H₂O’ (Frege 1892).

The simple view of emotional justification has a similar structure. Goldie and D&T hold that cognitive bases enable subjects to be aware of objects as having some N-properties. If complexes of N-properties are presented under a mode of presentation that is different from the way formal objects are presented in emotional experiences, then the rational thing to do when one is aware of these complexes of N-properties is to stay cool and withhold one’s emotions.

Let us develop this point in some detail. We have two options: either the subject is aware of N-properties *as* N-properties (i.e., under a non-evaluative mode of presentation – MOP_n) or *as* E-properties (i.e., under an evaluative mode of presentation – MOP_e). Unfortunately, the two options lead to the same result.¹⁹

Non-Evaluative Modes of Presentation. If the subject is aware of the N-properties under a non-evaluative mode of presentation, she should find the following question reasonable: ‘Is it true that this(MOP_n) is the same as that(MOP_e)? To be permitted to respond with an emotion, our subject should know that the answer to this question is ‘yes’. Still, it is unclear how the *sole* awareness of some N-properties under a non-evaluative mode of presentation could deliver that affirmative answer. Indeed, answering ‘yes’ to this question based only on one’s awareness of some N-properties under a non-evaluative mode of presentation would lead our agent to jump to conclusions.

Imagine an agent who sees a dog with big teeth and moving erratically. Even if these features do in fact constitute the dangerousness of the dog in the current circumstances, the agent’s sole awareness of the dog as having big teeth and moving erratically would not suffice to make it reasonable for her to feel fear of the dog. After all, some inoffensive dogs have big teeth, while others move erratically out of joy. More generally: If justification is cashed out in terms of epistemic permissibility, an agent’s awareness of some evaluative properties under non-evaluative modes of presentation is not sufficient for her to be permitted to respond with an emotion whose formal object is constituted by those properties.²⁰

Some might wonder whether this argument presupposes some form of internalism (Oliver-Skuse 2016: Chapter 2). I agree that this line of argument will be more appealing to an internalist about epistemic justification. Nevertheless, I have formulated it in such a way that even an externalist should recognize it as a problem. Indeed, externalists should grant that there are cases in which we are not permitted to jump to conclusions. Thus, if the externalist sees no problem here, she owes us an explanation of why we are permitted

¹⁹ Oliver-Skuse (2016: Chapter 2) reached a similar conclusion on different grounds. McGrath (forthcoming) has also developed a similar argument against Setiya’s inferential account of moral knowledge. In the next section, I argue that her considerations do not lend support to a perceptual theory of evaluative experience.

²⁰ The gap problem also arises for the stronger concept of justification in terms of obligation. If some inoffensive dogs have big teeth, while others move erratically out of joy, it is unclear why an agent *ought* to feel fear of that dog.

The gap problem also generalizes to non-reductive views of evaluative properties. Suppose that the properties of having big teeth and moving erratically are only *correlated* with the property of being dangerous. If two properties *F* and *G* are merely correlated, a subject is not permitted to conclude that *G* is instantiated *just* because she was aware of *F*. Something is missing.

to jump to conclusions in the case of emotions but not in other, structurally similar cases. Before this explanation is provided, the gap problem is still with us.²¹

D&T have insisted that emotions do not explicitly represent evaluative properties (Deonna and Teroni 2012, 2014, 2015). Thus, one might think that the argument does not generalize to their view. I cannot evaluate D&T's view here. Still, the previous argument does apply to D&T's view. D&T endorse the cognitivist claim that emotions provide *epistemic access* to the evaluative properties of their intentional objects (Section 1). In addition, they hold that emotions have a phenomenal character that distinguishes them from perception, memory, and beliefs, which in turn play the role of cognitive bases. Hence, there is a broad sense in which cognitive bases and emotions provide different modes of access to formal objects. Thus, even if emotions do not explicitly represent formal objects under evaluative modes of presentation, D&T's view still faces the gap problem.

Evaluative Modes of Presentation. On this view, the subject is aware of the N-properties that constitute the formal object of her emotion *E* under an evaluative mode of presentation *MOP_e* and this awareness confers justification on *E*. I am not aware of any well-worked out conception along these lines. Yet, Michael Brady's (2010, 2013) recent work comes close to this view. According to Brady, emotions motivate us to search for considerations that bear on the accuracy of our emotional appraisals. Emotions perform this feat by directing our attention toward significant features of the situation. Suppose that you are trying to get to sleep and hear a noise downstairs. You feel fear and are motivated to seek out "considerations that have a bearing on whether your initial emotional 'take' on the situation, namely that we are in danger, is accurate. [You] strain [y]our ears to hear other anomalous noises, or rack [your brain] trying to think of possible non-threatening causes for the noise". Brady suggests that "it is *these* considerations that provide us with information about the evaluative realm" (Brady 2010: 124). Subsequently, he posits the existence of *non-emotional* capacities to recognize the instantiation of evaluative properties and claims that those capacities are the sources of justification of emotions.

Brady's analysis is insightful in many ways. He is right to stress that emotions often motivate us to look for reasons. Nevertheless, Brady's approach does not provide a satisfactory solution to the gap problem.

First, it is a central commitment of cognitivist theories that emotions provide epistemic access to the evaluative properties of their intentional objects (Section 1). If we use Brady's view to solve the gap problem, we must reject the cognitivist view. If we reject it, however, we will need to provide a different story about the epistemic role of the emotions.

One might be tempted by Brady's contention that the epistemic role of emotions is precisely to direct our attention to significant features of the situation. Unfortunately, Brady's arguments for this view are not conclusive. An initial worry is that 'significant features' seems to be synonymous with 'evaluative properties'. So, emotions cannot direct our attention to significant features unless they are somehow sensitive to evaluative properties. And being sensitive to evaluative properties comes very close to giving access to evaluative properties. Moreover, it is perfectly consistent to hold that emotions *often* motivate us to search for reasons without endorsing the stronger claim that they *always* do so. This seems particularly clear in the case of basic emotions. When I am afraid of the dog and run away, I have no time to search for reasons that bear on the dangerousness of the dog. Still, it is

²¹ Indeed, the view I will recommend is compatible with externalism understood as the claim that *some* of the factors that determine justification are external (in a suitable sense of 'external'). See Section 5.

reasonable to hold that fear provided me with epistemic access to the dangerousness of the dog and that this access motivated me to act in the way I did. Crucially, we are interested in the epistemic justification of basic emotions. Thus, any alternative account of the epistemic role of emotions should generalize to basic emotions.

Third, even if Brady is right to point out that emotions are justified by non-emotional capacities to recognize the instantiation of evaluative properties, this would not solve the gap problem. To see why, it is important to recall the H₂O/water example. That example shows that one can generate an epistemic gap outside the evaluative domain. Intuitively, the reason why 'H₂O' and 'water' refer to water under different modes of presentation is that a rational subject who ignores that 'H₂O' and 'water' are co-extensional should suspend judgment when she is presented with the identity sentence 'H₂O is water'. In other words, suspending judgment on that identity sentence is the reasonable thing to do for that subject. Consider now Brady's proposal. We might think of Brady's view as positing two different modes of presentation: non-emotional modes of presentation of evaluative properties and emotional modes of presentation of those evaluative properties. Given that these modes of presentation are different, a subject is not permitted to move back and forth from one to the other unless she has some background information that these modes of presentation are in fact co-extensional. Unfortunately, Brady has provided no story about the sources of this background information.

To sum up, the simple view holds that the contents of cognitive bases are sufficient to confer immediate propositional justification on basic emotions. I have explored two ways in which cognitive bases could represent the properties that constitute the formal objects of emotions. Non-evaluative modes of presentation introduce Moorean-Fregean informative identities. Thus, they predict that an agent who is aware solely of the properties that constitute the formal object of her *would-be* emotion is not permitted to respond with that emotion. Evaluative modes of presentation face three problems: they lead us to reject cognitivism about emotions; they do not seem to provide a general account of our access to evaluative properties; and they do not solve the gap problem.²²

4. Inferentialism, Value Skepticism, and Perceptualism

An obvious strategy to solve the gap problem is to introduce *additional* reasons. Consider an analogy. Intuitively, the proposition <John's best friend is coming to the party> is not a reason to believe the proposition <Pat is coming to the party>. If I tell you that John's best friend is coming to the party, you are *not permitted* to conclude that Pat is coming to the party. If you were to do so, you would be jumping to conclusions. Still, the proposition <John's best friend is coming to the party> can become your reason to believe the proposition <Pat is coming to the party> if you are given another reason that bridges the gap: <John's best friend is Pat>. Thus, we might want to introduce a bridge proposition that links our non-emotional access to evaluative properties via cognitive bases and the formal objects as they figure in our emotional responses. Hence, we could solve the gap problem as follows:

²² Other philosophers have posited non-emotional modes of access to evaluative properties. See, e.g., Mulligan (2009) and the references therein. I have two worries in relation to these proposals. First, I do not find these non-emotional modes of access to evaluative properties intelligible. Second, I am inclined to think that these views should be introduced only if we have compelling reasons to think that the cognitivist view cannot be preserved. One of my aims is to show that the cognitivist view can be preserved.

Premise 1: I am aware of an object, *o*, as having N-properties *F, G, H...*

Premise 2: N-properties *F, G, H...* constitute the formal object of emotion *E* in the current circumstances.

Conclusion: Therefore, emotion *E* is permitted for me in the current circumstances.

This solution faces a major problem: it leads to value skepticism. Suppose that in order to be permitted to respond with emotion *E* to an object, *o*, an agent needs to have antecedent justification for premise 2. Thus, our agent needs to have justification for the proposition that N-properties *F, G, H...* constitute the formal object of emotion *E* in the current circumstances. But where does this justification come from? If we do not come up with a plausible explanation, value skepticism follows. This justification cannot come from emotion *E*, for *E* only provides epistemic access to its own formal object. If this justification comes from a different source, it seems that there is a way of having epistemic access to the formal object of *E* that does not require *E*. Thus, it is at best unclear why we should still hold the cognitivist view of emotions.

It might be thought that the gap problem and value skepticism only arise for those views that conceive of the epistemic role of emotions on the model of belief.²³ Thus, one might want to avoid the problems so far by conceiving of the emotions on the model of perceptual experiences. Unfortunately, the gap problem still arises for this family of views in a different guise.

Here are two representative examples of perceptual theories:

I will reserve expressions of the form ‘I see *x* as *A*,’ where *A* is a thick affective concept, for those cases in which the thing I see as *A* is the intentional object of an emotional state. So when I see something as rude I am in a distinctive emotional state. An emotion is therefore a unitary state that has both a cognitive aspect and an affective aspect that are necessarily connected. An emotion is a state of feeling a characteristic way about something seen as rude, as pitiful, as contemptible, and so on (Zagzebski 2003: 114).

According to the so-called Perceptual Account, emotions are a kind of perception: they represent their objects in certain ways. What is specific about emotions is that they represent things as having certain evaluative properties (Tappolet 2011: 120; see also Döring 2007; Goldie 2000, 2004).

Perceptual theories of emotions share a core perceptual claim:

Core Perceptual Claim

Emotions are experiences that represent their objects under evaluative modes of presentation. These evaluative modes of presentation (partly) explain the phenomenal character of the emotions, i.e. *what it is like* to have them.

One might think that nothing that falls short of an emotional-evaluative mode of presentation can suffice to justify basic emotions. In other words, we need to posit an awareness of formal objects under evaluative modes of presentation that also explain the

²³ This is a key assumption of McGrath’s (forthcoming) defense of moral perception. If the arguments to follow are correct, McGrath’s diagnosis is mistaken.

phenomenal character of emotions. This move solves our problem, not by bridging the gap, but by eliminating it. It also avoids value skepticism by positing a perceptual mode of access to evaluative properties.

On close inspection, however, perceptual theories do not solve the gap problem. Even if we endorse a perceptual account of emotions, there is still a sense in which our emotional experiences do not provide a basic mode of access to the world. Even perceptual theorists have recognized this point. Thus, McDowell (1985) grants that, contrary to sensory qualities, values do not stand in *causal* relations to us. Even if they did, their causal relation to our affective systems must be indirect. This point dovetails with the claim that emotional responses are *grounded in* our non-evaluative modes of access to the world (Section 1). On the plausible assumption that this grounding relation is not primitive, we should elucidate it.²⁴

It is natural to think of the emotions on the model of high-level perception. If high-level properties are properties “other than color, shape, illumination, motion, and their co-instantiation in objects” (Siegel 2006: 481), evaluative properties are high-level properties. On this approach, emotional experiences bear structural similarities to the experiences of expert birdwatchers when they visually recognize birds: their visual recognition of a bird as a canary is phenomenally immediate. The trouble here is that high-level contents such as ‘canary’ are not representationally *basic*. Indeed, when we perceptually represent a high-level content, we do so *in virtue of* representing more basic contents (Pryor 2000: 539). If I visually represent a tomato, I do so in virtue of representing its shape, color, and texture. Therefore, even if the subject may be unable to tell which low-level properties ground her high-level experiences, perceptual theorists owe us an account of how high-level emotional modes of presentation can be grounded in low-level contents and whether this transition from low- to high-level contents can have a deleterious effect on epistemic justification.

Another popular idea is to say that emotional experiences have a structure analogous to what Wittgenstein (1953) called ‘seeing as’ (Roberts 2003; Zagzebski 2003). Consider the famous duck-rabbit diagram. This diagram illustrates the claim that one can experience the same entity in different ways: as a duck or as a rabbit. Similarly, one might hold that, when I feel angry at John’s sexist joke, I ‘see’ John’s joke as offensive. Yet, it would be unsatisfactory to leave things there. We still need an account of how this aspectual seeing is grounded in a more basic representation. If we see a diagram as a rabbit, we must explain how this way of seeing the diagram is grounded in our experience of its geometrical properties. An explanation might go as follows: the elongated shapes are like the ears of rabbits, its commissure is like a rabbit’s mouth, the dot is like a rabbit’s eye seen from one side, and so on. These geometrical configurations impose limits on the *permissible* interpretations. You see the figure as a rabbit because you are already familiar with the relevant properties of rabbits and can exploit those similarities to see the diagram as a rabbit. If emotions have the same structure as Wittgenstein’s ‘seeing as’, we should provide an account of how one’s awareness of the low-level properties of the situation constrain the *permissible* emotional responses. In our example of basic fear, we should explain how an agent’s awareness of the teeth and erratic behavior of the dog constrains the permissible emotions toward the dog, so that fear is justified while joy is not.

²⁴ There are different ways of cashing out the concept of grounding. It will do no harm to our discussion if we work with an intuitive understanding of this concept.

In sum, inferential solutions lead either to value skepticism or the rejection of cognitivism, for they rely on a bridge premise that cannot be justified by cognitivist lights. Perceptual theories of emotions could only avoid this problem if they managed to explain how our evaluative perceptual experiences are grounded in representations with low-level contents.²⁵ In the next section, I propose a solution to the gap problem that does not fall prey to value skepticism and discharges some of the explanatory requirements of perceptual theories. My solution can be integrated within any broadly cognitivist theory of emotions.

5. Solving the Gap Problem

The gap problem has three roots:

- 1) The claim that emotions provide epistemic access to the evaluative properties of their intentional objects.
- 2) The claim that emotions are grounded in other mental states or episodes that represent the intentional objects of emotions in a non-emotional way.
- 3) The claim that some emotions are immediately justified in the weak sense of borrowing their justification from their cognitive bases alone.

One might want to reject one of these assumptions. I want to preserve cognitivism because I am not aware of any alternative characterization of the epistemic role of emotions that is both plausible and well worked out. I also find it uncontroversial that emotions are grounded in other mental states or episodes that represent the intentional objects of emotions in a non-emotional way. Thus, I will modify assumption 3: it is true that some emotions are more immediately justified than others. This claim is particularly plausible in the case of basic emotions, which are processed in subcortical areas that are informationally encapsulated. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to hold that those emotions borrow their justification from their cognitive bases alone. My suggestion is to rethink the way in which emotions are grounded. Roughly, emotions are manifestations of emotional dispositions. These emotional dispositions are keyed to some non-evaluative properties that are given to us via the cognitive bases of emotions. Other things being equal, if the agent is aware of the instantiation of these non-evaluative properties, she will respond emotionally to the intentional object. Thus, our epistemic access to evaluative properties results from the interplay of cognitive bases and emotional dispositions. Emotional responses are the synthesis of these two sources. My proposal is that we can exploit this psychological structure to capture the distinction between the justification of basic emotions and the justification of more sophisticated emotions.²⁶ Crucially, the appeal to emotional dispositions dispels some of the mystery that surrounds our epistemic access to evaluative properties. Thus, even if one is attracted by a perceptual account,

²⁵ My point is *not* that the account of how emotions are grounded in representations with low-level contents *cannot be* given; it is rather that it *has not been* given. It is only after having provided the account that perceptual theorists may claim to have solved the gap problem.

²⁶ I will try to solve the problem of propositional emotional justification by reflecting on the psychological structure of emotional responses. This view is available to anyone who holds that attitudinal justification is more fundamental than propositional justification. See footnote 8.

one ought to introduce emotional dispositions into the structure of emotional justification. I propose to develop these two points by reflecting on a concrete example.²⁷

Consider three different situations:

Situation 1: You are seeing a gorilla in the zoo. Believing that it is safely behind the bars, you form the judgment: 'That gorilla is dangerous'.

Situation 2: You suddenly realize that the door to the cage has been left open. This has an immediate impact on your evaluation. You move from the initially cold evaluative judgment to feeling fear of the gorilla.

Situation 3: Your friend Peter has worked in the zoo for many years. He fed the gorilla when its mother abandoned it and has been feeding it since then. When Peter suddenly realizes that the door to the cage has been left open, he stays calm but rushes to close it. 'The gorilla is dangerous... someone might be injured', he thinks.²⁸

Goldie has used similar examples to defend the claim that emotions represent objects under *de se* modes of presentation. We can use our examples to defend a different claim. In the three situations, the cognitive basis (visual perception) provides the subject matter of all the evaluations. All these evaluations are *about* the gorilla. Nevertheless, there are crucial differences. Whereas you are disposed to feel fear of the gorilla (Situation 2), your friend is not disposed to feel fear of the gorilla (Situation 3). Situations 1 and 2 are different too. Your disposition to feel fear of the gorilla is keyed to some features of the situation. In this case, your noticing that the door to the cage has been left open triggers the fear experience.

I propose to think of our epistemic access to evaluative properties on the model of Situation 2. Situation 2 lends credibility to the claim that the emotional response is grounded in its cognitive basis *and* an emotional disposition. The emotional disposition explains why you do not feel fear in Situation 1. In that case, you did not represent a triggering condition of your disposition to feel fear of gorillas. This also explains the difference between you and Peter. Peter has a slightly different emotional disposition; that is why he can issue a cold evaluation. Crucially, the proposed view dispels some of the mystery lurking in our access to evaluative properties. Your emotional disposition is not directly triggered by the perception of danger, as if you had an arcane sense that is put into operation by the detection of instances of danger. Your emotional disposition is rather triggered by a non-evaluative property of the door (being left open). There is no inherent difficulty in understanding how we could have epistemic access to that property. Thus, the proposed approach also indicates how we can improve upon perceptual accounts of emotions. The property <The door to the cage being left open> signals the dangerousness of the gorilla in that situation. Thus, emotions stand in at least two sorts of grounding relations with their cognitive bases. First, cognitive bases provide the emotions with their intentional objects. Second, they deliver representations of properties that

²⁷ Dispositions have also figured in the work of some perceptual theorists, including D'Arms and Jacobson (2010), Goldie (2007), Jacobson (2005), McDowell (1985, 1987), and Roberts (2003). They either invoke them as *existence conditions* of emotions or as parts of a theory of evaluative judgment. My contribution is the introduction of dispositions to solve the gap problem, which arises for emotional justification.

²⁸ The cases are inspired from Goldie (2000: 61), who developed them on the basis of similar examples from Perry (1979). See also Döring (2007: 373).

signal the instantiation of the evaluative properties that figure in the correctness conditions of the corresponding emotions.²⁹

Consider now the concept of justification as permissibility. The gap problem relies on the intuition that we are not permitted to jump to conclusions. This gap is absent from deductive transitions. Why is the transition from p , $\langle \text{if } p, \text{ then } q \rangle$ to q permitted? Part of the answer is that q *seems follow* from p and $\langle \text{if } p, \text{ then } q \rangle$. In other words, q *seems to be contained in* p and $\langle \text{if } p, \text{ then } q \rangle$. We cannot avail ourselves of the concept of logical consequence in the context of ampliative transitions, i.e. transitions where the content of the end state goes beyond the content of the initial state. Nevertheless, we have something similar at our disposal. Consider the case of perceptual recognition. Intuitively, expertise is a way of achieving phenomenologically seamless transitions, i.e. transitions that strike us as ‘obvious’ from the first-person perspective. The perceptual judgment ‘this is a canary’ is reasonable by the ornithologist’s lights because she can seamlessly move from the detection of the low-level properties of some birds to the recognition of those birds as canaries. For the ornithologist, a bird with such and such low-level properties *is* a canary. The very same transition does not seem obvious to me. Since I cannot tell a finch from a canary, I am aware of a gap between my perception of those same low-level properties and different possible categorizations of the bird. Thus, I would have to make a guess or inference to categorize the bird. The suggestion is that these phenomenological considerations are not accidental. Expert birdwatchers have achieved high reliability in bird recognition. This high reliability is reflected in the phenomenology of perceptual recognition, i.e. in how expert birdwatchers experience the transition from the representation of low-level properties to the representation of high-level properties.³⁰

Something similar occurs in our most basic emotional responses. Presumably, our basic emotional dispositions have been developed through long evolutionary processes in relatively stable environments. Some of these emotional dispositions can also be shaped and modified through learning, therapy or habit (as in Situation 3). Once we are endowed with the relevant dispositions, the emotional responses they ground are permitted from the first-person perspective. If you have the emotional disposition that grounds your fear, you cannot even raise the Moorean question: ‘But is it true that the gorilla is dangerous?’ There is no phenomenal gap between your awareness of the gorilla in a non-emotional way and your awareness of the gorilla in an emotional way. You seamlessly move from your perceptual representation of the gorilla to an emotional experience of fear of the gorilla. You seamlessly move from perception to the action tendencies that characterize

²⁹ The proposed view differs from Prinz’s (2004), who thinks of emotions as bodily feelings that have the function of indicating the instantiation of core relational themes. In my view, it is not bodily feelings but rather properties of the situation that signal the instantiation of formal objects. These properties should bear some salient relation to the intentional object. In the case at hand, I am afraid *of* the gorilla. My fear is directed at the gorilla because I detected a property that bears a close relation to it: the door to its cage being left open. I am therefore compelled to ascribe a different role to bodily feelings. My hypothesis is that bodily feelings enable us to regulate our emotions and self-ascribe them.

³⁰ There is a lively debate on how exactly to account for the phenomenology of expert perceptual recognition. Although all parties agree that expertise leads to a change in the *overall* phenomenal character of one’s visual experience, it is not entirely clear how best to explain this overall phenomenal change (Siegel 2010). My talk about ‘seamless transitions’ is intended to capture the uncontroversial claim that the way we *move* from perception to recognition changes with expertise. Experts experience those transitions as phenomenally seamless; those same moves strike the non-experts as having gaps that must be sewn together by bridge principles.

fear. Deonna and Teroni (2012: 80) capture this point in an insightful way: “[you] feel the way [your] body is poised to act in a way that will contribute to the neutralization of what provokes the fear”. Similarly, when you find the joke funny, you cannot help laughing at it. Your representation of the situation described by the joke seamlessly leads to amusement at the joke. If you could stop somewhere in between, you did not get the joke or were not epistemically permitted to laugh at it.

These remarks suggest a new picture of the way emotions provide us with epistemic access to evaluative properties. It is a mistake to try to assign the responsibility for this access to a single entity, either the cognitive basis or the emotion. Instead, that epistemic access is a joint endeavor. It is achieved when the agent moves from the detection of the trigger of the emotional disposition to some action tendencies. Thus, accessing an evaluative property is not passively recognizing a property of the intentional object. It is rather a *transition* from a cognitive basis to an actualization of an emotional disposition.

I have developed these suggestions by reflecting on the *processes* that lead to specific emotional responses. This might seem to contradict the original aim of dealing with propositional justification. Yet, the problem is just apparent. Indeed, some philosophers hold that attitudinal justification is more fundamental than propositional justification (see Goldman 1986, for the priority of doxastic justification over propositional justification). We can therefore generalize these lessons to propositional justification by formulating a counterfactual analysis. We can solve the gap problem as follows:

Basic Emotional Justification

If a subject *S*'s basic emotion *E* about an object, *o*, is justified, then:

- *S* is (or seems to be) aware of *o* as having some N-properties *F*, *G*, *H*...
- *S* has a set of emotional dispositions that, other things being equal, would lead her to move from the detection of *F*, *G*, *H*... to the corresponding emotion *E*.
- If the emotional response were to occur, *S* would experience the transition from the cognitive basis to the emotion as a phenomenologically seamless transition.

It is worth making two remarks on this analysis. First, I have not offered *sufficient* conditions for emotional justification. The reason is that a complete account of emotional justification should be supplemented with a theory of emotional dispositions. This theory should be further tested by its capacity to deal with defeaters, ‘barn’ cases, and similar scenarios that have been discussed in the epistemological literature. I will say something about this program in the next section. Second, Deonna and Teroni (2012: 104–17) have offered a battery of arguments to the effect that dispositions such as moods, sentiments, and character traits do not positively contribute to the justification of emotions. These arguments deserve to be examined. Unfortunately, I do not have sufficient space to discuss them here. I will rather spend some time responding to some specific objections to the current approach.

6. Objections and Replies

Objection 1: It could be objected that the dispositional view is not an alternative to inferentialism but rather a version of it. Indeed, one might claim that, even if an emotional

response is grounded in a corresponding emotional disposition, the subject still needs antecedent justification to believe a bridge proposition of the form: N-properties *F*, *G*, *H*... constitute the formal object of emotion *E* in the current circumstances.

Reply: This objection would lead us back to value skepticism (Section 4). I have assumed that value skepticism is not a desirable position. Still, my goal was not the ambitious one of refuting value skepticism but rather the modest one of sketching an account of emotional justification that does not have skeptical consequences. And inferentialism has skeptical consequences. Thus, our question is: Are there reasonable grounds to think that the dispositional account does not have skeptical consequences? My answer is 'yes'. Indeed, a generalized form of inferentialism would lead to a highly unstable position. To begin with, notice that there are plenty of ampliative transitions in our mental life that are not plausibly construed along inferential lines. Yet, we have the strong intuition that those ampliative transitions are epistemically permissible. If you see a red square and a blue circle, your visual system moved from sensory states that detect redness, squareness, blueness, and circularity to other sensory states that represent a red square and a blue circle. This transition is ampliative because your visual system had to go beyond the deliverances of feature detectors. After all, the detection of redness, squareness, blueness, and circularity could correspond to a scene containing a blue square and a red circle or a scene containing four scattered properties. Still, this transition strikes most non-skeptics as epistemically permissible. Crucially, it is implausible to hold that taking the binding of these features at face value is justified because we have antecedent justification to believe a background proposition, as the inferential model would predict. A more plausible hypothesis is that we are endowed with dispositions to bind different features into object representations. If we do not posit these dispositions, we will be led to the troubling conclusion that even primitive perceptual propositions such as <This is a red square> cannot be epistemically justified by perception alone. After all, it is unclear how the proposition <This square goes together with that instance of redness> could be epistemically justified.

My suggestion is that something similar holds for basic emotions. Emotions such as fear have correctness conditions that feature formal objects. Basic emotions are partly justified by basic dispositions to bind those formal objects to their intentional objects. These basic dispositions are triggered by non-evaluative properties that bear salient relations to the emotions' intentional object.³¹

Objection 2: Some readers might protest that the dispositional account faces a circularity problem. Indeed, one might contend that our understanding of emotional dispositions is parasitic on our understanding of emotional episodes. To illustrate, the emotional disposition that grounds fear is to be understood as a disposition to feel fear in dangerous situations. Thus, it is a mistake to hold that fear is grounded in an emotional disposition.

Reply: I can grant that our understanding of emotional dispositions is parasitic on our understanding of emotional episodes. Yet, this does not prevent the dispositional view from offering an informative account of emotional justification. Indeed, it is possible to characterize emotional dispositions in ways that go *beyond* specific emotional episodes, and these characterizations are epistemically significant. Thus, Mulligan (1998: 163)

³¹ This is a very special kind of binding. In my view, it is phenomenologically realized in our experience of action tendencies. I leave this issue for another occasion.

suggests that sentiments “fix the range of variation of a subject’s” emotional responses.³² Similarly, Roberts (2003: 142) describes the broader category of a concern “as a principle of predilection of a range of widely various emotional responses”. Thus, one might think of emotional dispositions as providing *templates* that determine the ways in which a subject would react to some types of events or situations. An epistemological theory of emotional dispositions could therefore examine the conditions under which these templates are epistemically good or bad. It is obvious that some emotional dispositions are epistemically bad. Love often leads to unwarranted admiration and being timid often leads to feel fear of inoffensive objects and situations. A theory of emotional justification could therefore identify commonalities between these templates and use them to identify the conditions under which an emotional disposition is epistemically good or bad. It could also describe some general features of the acquisition of emotional dispositions by evolution, habit or education. Presumably, some modes of acquisition may negatively or positively affect emotional justification.³³

Objection 3: Some readers might complain that the dispositional account faces a problem analogous to a famous problem faced by psychological behaviorism. Arguably, it is not always possible to specify the triggering conditions of emotional dispositions in non-evaluative terms.

Reply: I do not claim that the triggering conditions of *all* emotional dispositions can be specified in non-evaluative terms. Indeed, some of them may be based on representations with evaluative contents. As an illustration, many people have experienced indignation at Donald Trump’s election because they judge him to be *unworthy* of being the US president. More generally, many emotions can be based on judgments of value. My point is rather that the triggering conditions of *several* emotional dispositions can be specified in non-evaluative terms. This is all we need to avoid value skepticism while dispelling some of the mystery that surrounds our epistemic access to evaluative properties. The case of the gorilla is a representative example of this idea. Once we think about the structure of this case, it is not difficult to come up with many other examples. A rat’s fear of an imminent electroshock can be keyed to its hearing of a beep, which is specifiable in non-evaluative terms. An animal’s fear and avoidance responses can be keyed to the colors of poisonous substances. Similarly, episodes of grief and longing can be triggered by the perceptual recognition of the beloved’s belongings, which do not need to be described in evaluative terms; they are just tightly associated with the beloved one.

7. Concluding Remarks

The simple view of emotional justification holds that the justification of some emotions supervenes on the content of their cognitive bases alone. I introduced a series of epistemological distinctions to clarify the scope of the simple view. The simple view is most plausibly construed as an account of immediate propositional justification understood as epistemic permissibility. This restricted thesis faces the gap problem: If there is a difference in the ways cognitive bases represent objects and properties and the ways the

³² Mulligan (1998) does not construe sentiments as bases of emotions but as bases of intentions and wantings. Thus, his view faces the gap problem.

³³ Virtue epistemology would be a natural starting point to pursue these inquiries. I think that current accounts of epistemic and moral virtues will benefit from a closer examination of emotional justification.

emotions (re)present the evaluative properties of those objects, the simple view has failed to provide sufficient conditions for emotional justification. I considered various ways of solving the gap problem and found them wanting. The purported solutions either lead to value skepticism, or contradict cognitivism, or are not sufficiently illuminating.

One might solve the gap problem by rejecting cognitivism or the claim that emotions are grounded in other mental states or episodes. I proposed a more conservative view. I preserved the intuition that some emotions are more immediately justified than others by introducing a dispositional model of our access to evaluative properties. On this view, subjects have emotional dispositions that, in conjunction with the contents of emotions' cognitive bases, can confer immediate emotional justification. Emotional dispositions explain how one can have epistemic access to evaluative properties without being able to literally *detect* those evaluative properties. They also explain why emotional responses seem to be permissible from the first-person perspective.

It is an open question how, on the proposed account, emotions contribute to the justification of evaluative judgments. This is a difficult issue that should be tackled by analyzing the representational structure of emotions. It is worth stressing, however, that the proposed account offers a contribution of broader interest to epistemology: it provides a series of cases in which immediate justification does not require that the representational content of the *justifier* mental state be identical to the content of the *justified* mental state or episode. Thus, philosophers interested in the scope of immediate justification should pay closer attention to the epistemology of emotions.³⁴

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³⁴ I am extremely grateful to Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni for helping me find my way through the intricate literature on emotions. Special thanks are due to the participants at the workshop *Experience, Values, and Justification* (Geneva, 2–3 June 2016) for their probing questions and remarks, especially to Berit Brogaard, Elijah Chudnoff, David Faraci, Karen Jones, Federico Lauria, Moritz Müller, and Peter Railton. I would also like to thank Richard Dub for several stimulating conversations on the emotions, Arturs Logins for advice on epistemic matters, and Tristram Oliver-Skuse, who kindly sent me his excellent dissertation and made detailed comments on an earlier draft. I presented a subsequent version of this article at the Institut Jean Nicod (November 9, 2016). Many thanks to Jöelle Proust, Paul Egré, and their students for their objections and remarks. A nearly final version of this article was also discussed at Susanna Schellenberg's research seminar at Rutgers University. I am grateful to Susanna and her students for their suggestions of improvement. Finally, I would like to thank the Swiss Center for Affective Sciences (NCCR) and *Thumos: The Genevan Research Group on Emotions, Values, and Norms* at the University of Geneva for providing an ideal research environment while I was preparing this manuscript. Work on this project was funded by a generous grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation (FNS 100012_150265/1).

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