

Knowing Value and Acknowledging Value

Abstract

It is widely assumed that emotions are evaluative. Moreover, many authors suppose that emotions are important or valuable in virtue of being evaluations. According to the currently dominant version of cognitivism, emotions are evaluative insofar as they make us aware of value properties of their intentional objects. In attributing to emotions an epistemic role, this view conceives of them as epistemically valuable. In this paper, I argue that proponents of this account mischaracterize the evaluative character of emotions and, a fortiori, their value. Moreover, I propose an alternative view of emotional evaluation, according to which emotions are practically rather than epistemically important. As I argue, emotions are ways of acknowledging their intentional objects as (dis)valuable. As such, they do not apprehend values but make them *count*. I elaborate this idea by drawing an analogy with legal and political sanctions. The resulting view has it that emotions are practically important in that they affirm the cares and concerns which serve as standards of emotional evaluation.

1. Introduction

Much of the renewed philosophical interest in emotion focuses on the thought that emotions are evaluative. According to this thought, an emotion is directed towards some object or event under a specific evaluative aspect: in fearing something we fear it *as a danger*, while things we admire are admired by us *under the aspect of excellence*. In this way, a specific type of emotion is paired with a particular value or disvalue property, which purports to be exemplified by things at which instances of this emotion are directed. (Following common terminology, I will call the (dis)value thus related to an emotion its *formal object*.¹)

While this conception concerns the ascription of value to the intentional object of an emotion, it is closely related to a further thought, according to which emotions *themselves* possess value. Part of what motivates philosophical interest in the idea of emotional evaluation is that it promises to make sense of the impression that emotions occupy a significant role in our psychological lives. Put more pointedly, many suppose that *emotions matter because they are about what matters*. In elaborating their theories, these authors propose accounts of the value of emotions which are based on more substantive views of their evaluative character.

¹ From now on, I will use ‘value’ and ‘evaluative property’ for both value and disvalue properties.

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This connection was first forged explicitly by Solomon (1993). Solomon argues that emotions are directed at things under evaluative aspects insofar as they are constitutive evaluative judgments. On this view, fear towards x is a judgment to the effect that x is dangerous. Moreover, qua *constitutive* judgment, fear towards x actually *makes it the case* that x is dangerous. This value-constituting role of emotions is also what, on Solomon's view, renders them valuable. Their importance resides in the fact that emotions "fill [...] our lives with meanings" (1993, xvii). As we might say, for Solomon, emotions matter in virtue of making things matter to us.

While historically influential, Solomon's account has fallen out of favour in the recent debate on emotion. As has been pointed out, it distorts our pre-theoretical conception of emotion in ruling out, for example, the possibility of unfitting emotions, which are directed at things that do not have the corresponding evaluative property (Helm 1994, 323). At the same time, the thought that emotions are evaluative and valuable for this reason continues to be defended by proponents of (broadly) cognitivist views.² A prominent case in hand is the currently dominant view that emotions are vehicles of knowledge of value. On this view, emotions apprehend rather than constitute value: they are ways of coming to be aware of evaluative properties of their intentional object.³ (I shall call this view the Epistemic View or EV, for short.) The most common variant of EV assimilates emotion to perception. According to this variant, fear towards x is a (quasi-)perceptual impression of x as dangerous which, in favourable circumstances, constitutes awareness of the dangerousness of x (e.g. Döring 2007; Roberts 2013; Tappolet 2016; Milona 2016; Furtak 2018). Other variants conceive of emotions as a non-perceptual form of apprehension of value (e.g. Deonna & Teroni 2014; Mitchell 2021). What unifies perceptualist and non-perceptualist variants of EV is that their take on emotional

² Although currently a minority position, judgmentalism has found a further proponent in Nussbaum (2001). I discuss Nussbaum's view in section 3.

³ Some authors suppose that emotions both constitute and apprehend evaluative properties (e.g. Helm 1994, 2001; Slaby & Wüschner 2014). I will not be able to discuss these views, though my argument against EV in section 2 targets them, too.

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evaluation renders emotion epistemically significant. According to EV, emotions matter in virtue of making things known to matter.⁴

In this paper, I take a closer look at the idea that emotions are valuable as evaluations. My aim is two-fold. In the first, critical part of the paper, I argue that EV and the associated conception of the value of emotion do not provide a viable alternative to Solomon's proposal. In the second, constructive part, I motivate a novel take on the evaluative character of emotions, which comes with a specific non-epistemic view of their value. According to this proposal, emotions neither constitute nor make us aware of evaluative properties. Rather, to have an emotion is *to put to use* value awareness one already possesses. Although this alternative does not assimilate emotions to judgments, it suggests that there is a grain of truth to Solomon's claim that emotions matter in making things matter to us.

In developing these points, I will follow the cognitivist consensus that emotions are directed towards things under evaluative aspects provided by their formal object.⁵ I begin by arguing that an adequate understanding of the directedness of emotions is incompatible with EV (section 2). I then argue that the directedness supports a different, non-epistemic view of emotional evaluation, which contrasts also with judgmentalist accounts of emotion (section 3). In sections 4 and 5, I spell out the sense in which emotions matter on this alternative view.

2. Challenging the Epistemic View

EV owes a large part of its popularity to phenomenological considerations. As many suppose, from the first-person perspective, paradigm instances of emotion present themselves as experiences through which aspects of the environment are apprehended as possessing specific values (e.g. Meinong 1972; Furtak 2018, chapter 4; Mitchell 2021, 57ff., 118). In fact, for some

⁴ Since my concern is with the importance ascribed to emotions on all versions of EV, I will set aside the fact that some of its proponents also think of them as practically significant in making available reasons for action. Cf. Helm (2001, 75ff.), Döring (2007), Tappolet (2016, chapter 5), Mitchell (2021, 56f., 155ff.).

⁵ In this paper, I draw on prior work on emotional intentionality (REDACTED). Its main contribution is to develop more fully the positive view I outline in (REDACTED) and spell out its implications for the value of emotion.

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EV is an uncontroversial, pre-theoretical starting point for further enquiry into emotional evaluation (e.g. Deonna & Teroni 2014, 15f.).⁶ It seems some caution is warranted, though. If we look more closely at the way in which emotions are directed at things, we find that their intentionality fundamentally differs from the intentionality characteristic of forms of awareness. In this respect, EV seems in fact no less revisionary than Solomon's judgmentalism.

To get a grip on the directedness of emotion, it is helpful to look to their reactive or responsive character. As some reflection suggests, emotions are directed at their intentional objects *as responses to* them. According to a common use of the verb 'respond', feeling an emotion towards *x* is tantamount to responding to *x* with this emotion. For example, on this use, for Peter to fear the decline of Ukraine's autonomy is for him to respond to this prospect with fear. Similarly, for Maria to admire Ukrainian civilians who protest against the war is, on this usage, for her to respond to these protesters with admiration. This point about the way emotions relate to their intentional objects can be expressed also by means of other locutions. For example, according to a familiar use of 'meet', for someone to fear the decline of Ukraine's autonomy (to admire Ukrainian protesters) is for this prospect (the protesters) to be met by her with fear (admiration). In this context, 'meet' expresses the same reactive connection to the emotion's intentional object as does 'respond' in the foregoing examples.

How precisely are 'respond' and 'meet' used in these contexts? If we compare these examples with other familiar instances of their use, we find that they serve to ascribe reasons for which the respective attitude is held (motivating reasons). Their use in ascriptions of emotions and other attitudes is the same as their use in ascribing reasons for which someone performed a particular action. For example, in saying that a jury responds to someone's offences with severe punishment (or that her offences are met with severe punishment by the jury), we specify a reason for which the jury takes this action: the offences are that *in light or on account*

⁶ This is not to say that EV is defended exclusively on phenomenological or pre-theoretical grounds. Cf. Tappolet (2016, chapter 1), Mitchell (2021, chapter 3).

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of which punishment is administered. In the same vein, in meeting or responding to a prospect or event with fear or admiration, we feel a particular way in light or on account of that prospect or event. This interpretation is supported by the fact that we can unproblematically conjoin paradigm instances of the reason-ascribing use of these verbs in connection with action with their use in ascribing emotions. It is perfectly cogent to say, for example, that the jury responded to his offences with severe punishment *and* indignation or, alternatively, that his offences were met by the jury with punishment *and* indignation. In saying this, we are specifying a motivating reason both for the jury's action as well as for their indignation. This suggests that the relation between an emotion and its intentional object can be characterized in terms of the relation between a motivating reason and what it is a reason for (cf. also Müller 2017, 2019, chapter 3; Massin 2021).

With this in mind, let us now turn to the intentional phenomena in the focus of EV. As it turns out, we cannot meaningfully characterize the relation between forms of awareness and their objects in this way. Thus, it is not true that to apprehend or come to be aware of x is to respond to x (or for x to be met) with apprehension or awareness (cf. Müller 2022). For example, it is not the case that in coming to be aware of Russia's attack, say, Tom responds to Russia's attack with awareness (or that it is met by him with awareness). It does not so much as make sense to think of the attack as something in light or on account of which Tom comes to be aware. This is supported also by considerations on the specific form of awareness to which proponents of EV most often assimilate emotions. Thus, it is not the case that in perceiving a beautiful sunset, say, Maria responds to the sunset with perception (or that it is met by her with perception). Although the term 'response' is often used in connection with perception in a purely causal sense, we cannot meaningfully use it to express the thought that what one perceives is something in light or on account of which one perceives. In this respect, the

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intentionality of forms of awareness appears to be very different from the way emotions relate to their intentional object.⁷

Perhaps the claim that the intentional object of an emotion is a reason for which it is felt will strike some as implausible. One might be suspicious of this proposal since it may look as though intentional objects, taken by themselves, do not make the corresponding emotion intelligible. Thus, the prospect that Ukraine lose its autonomy *simpliciter* does not seem to explain why Tom is afraid. After all, those siding with the Russian invaders are likely to meet this prospect with hope and anticipation. Yet, the point of a motivating reason is precisely to make the corresponding action or attitude intelligible.

However, this worry rests on a misconception. It ignores that emotions are directed at their objects under a particular evaluative aspect provided by the corresponding formal object. Supposing it is correct that emotions are directed as responses, we should think of this aspect as qualifying the respective motivating reason (cf. Müller 2017, 2019, chapter 3). That is, the motivating reason provided by the intentional object of an emotion is a particular object or event *under the guise of the corresponding formal object*: the prospect of Ukraine's losing its autonomy is a reason for Tom's fear only insofar as it is construed by him as dangerous: he responds to this prospect as a danger. By contrast, those who respond to this prospect with hope respond to it as attractive or valuable.⁸ Thus, motivating reasons provided by intentional objects do have the requisite explanatory import. They possess it in virtue of (purportedly) exemplifying a particular evaluative property: what we respond to with emotions are (real or merely apparent) exemplifications of the corresponding formal object (von Hildebrand 1969; Mulligan 2007, 2010; Müller 2017, 2019, chapter 3; Massin 2021).

While this qualification helps to fend off a possible reply to my criticism of EV, it also contributes to clarifying the relation between EV and the account of emotional intentionality

⁷ In Müller (2022), I further expand on this point by relating it to a difference between cognitive preconditions of emotions and forms of awareness.

⁸ I further elaborate on the intelligibility of emotions in section 5.

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which I have set against the view. According to the latter, emotions are not to be identified with a form of value awareness, but are *preceded by* awareness of value. More precisely, as a response to a (real or merely apparent) exemplification of its formal object, an emotion presupposes rather than affords awareness (as) of its exemplification (cf. Hildebrand 1969, pt. I, chapter 1; Mulligan 2007, 2010; Müller 2017, 2019, chapter 3). This prior awareness makes available the evaluative reason for which it is felt and, as such, is distinct from the emotion. Thus, if I am right that emotions are directed as responses to things under a particular aspect, then in misconceiving the intentionality of emotions, EV also misconceives their evaluative character. Emotions are not evaluations in the epistemic sense of making us aware of value. Rather, their evaluative character should be elucidated in terms of their character as value responses, which as such presuppose value awareness.

If this critique is justified, then we should also take issue with the conception of the value of emotion that comes with EV. Supposing that emotions are not ways of apprehending value, this cannot be what makes them significant.⁹ Taking our cue from the above considerations on emotional directedness, it seems more plausible to suppose that their significance is grounded in their character as value responses. As I hope to show in subsequent sections, a proper understanding of this value responsive character in fact makes available an alternative, non-epistemic view of the way emotions matter. This resulting view suggests that Solomon's considerations on the significance of emotion are not too far off the mark after all.

On the assumption that emotions are directed in the sense explicated in this section, let me then try and flesh out how we should think of their evaluative character and value.

3. A practical alternative to the Epistemic View

⁹ Emotions might still be epistemically valuable in ways that are less directly related to their evaluative character, though. Cf. e.g. Brady (2013). However, as noted, my concern is with the value of emotion qua evaluation.

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To demonstrate that the proposed view of emotional intentionality supports an alternative conception of emotional evaluation, let me first relate this view to a further, normative role that the formal object of an emotion is widely thought to play.

Unpacking an idea which I touched upon when sketching an objection to Solomon's account in the Introduction, it can be argued that, when actually exemplified, formal objects also constitute *normative* reasons to feel the corresponding emotion. As I noted, they provide a standard of fittingness for instances of the corresponding emotion type. As this is generally spelled out, the exemplification of a formal object is both a necessary and a sufficient condition of fittingness for instances of the corresponding emotion. Thus, for example, fear (admiration) towards x is fitting if and only if x is dangerous (excellent). A plausible way to understand fittingness in this context is in terms of normative reasons: emotions are fitting insofar as they are made appropriate by a normative reason provided by their formal object (cf. Müller 2017, Naar 2021a).¹⁰ A further, more direct consideration in support of this conception of formal objects concerns their normative role in ordinary discourse. Explanations of emotions that cite formal objects as motivating reasons also do duty as justifications. For example, when Tom is asked why he fears the decline of Ukraine's autonomy, his answering "Because Ukraine's autonomy is in real danger" shows his fear to be in good standing. This answer depends for its justificatory force on danger (the formal object of fear) being a normative reason for fear: Tom's fear is shown to be an appropriate response to this reason.¹¹

If we suppose on these grounds that formal objects are both motivating and normative reasons for emotions, this makes available a novel account of their character as evaluations. According to this account, an emotion felt towards x is a way of *acknowledging* x as (dis)valuable (as an exemplification of the corresponding formal object). This proposal invokes a familiar use of the verb 'acknowledge x as F '. On this use, one acknowledges x as F by acting

¹⁰ In support of this view, cf. (REDACTED), Naar (2021a).

¹¹ Maguire (2018) argues that emotions do not admit of normative reasons. For a compelling response, cf. Massin (2021). In defence of the view that emotions have normative reasons cf. also Naar (2021b).

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(thinking, feeling) towards x in a particular way, which is made appropriate by actual F s, and by doing so for reason that x is (or purports to be) an F . As an example of this use, consider, for example, what is required, intuitively, for it to be true that Peter acknowledges his colleagues as such. One thing that seems to be required for this to be true is that Peter treat them in a particular way. That is, he must act towards them as is appropriate to act towards a fellow co-worker. If Peter were to treat his colleagues as mere competitors in the quest to get promoted, we would hesitate to think of him as acknowledging them as colleagues. For Peter to act in the appropriate way towards his colleagues is not sufficient for him to acknowledge them as such, though. If he acts in this way for some reason unconnected to their status as fellow co-workers (e.g. if he does so for purely strategic purposes, to win their favour etc.), we will, again, be reluctant to suppose he acknowledges them as having this status. Intuitively, Peter fails to do so despite acting appropriately as long as he is not thereby responding to the fact that they are his colleagues. By contrast, if he acts towards them as is appropriate to act towards a colleague and does so for the reason that they are his colleagues, there is a clear sense in which he acknowledges them as his colleagues. In short: Peter acknowledges his colleagues as such by responding appropriately to their status as colleagues.

Moving to the case of emotion, we find that this description generalizes. Thus, if Maria admires civilian protesters on account of the excellence which they manifest by courageously standing up for autonomy and peace, she feels a particular way towards the protesters, which it is appropriate to feel towards manifestations of excellence. As a normative reason for admiration, excellence favours or makes appropriate admiration. Moreover, since Maria feels that way on account of the protester's excellence, their excellence is also the reason for which she feels that way. Maria thus responds appropriately to their excellence in feeling as she does. This suggests that the conditions that make Peter's behaviour towards his colleagues intelligible as a way of acknowledging them as such are *mutatis mutandis* satisfied by Maria's admiration. In feeling towards the protesters as is appropriate to feel towards exemplifications of excellence

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for the reason that their behaviour displays excellence, Maria acknowledges them (or their behaviour) as excellent.

Note that this generalization is in keeping with the way we ordinarily characterize emotions (cf. Müller 2017). This is perhaps best illustrated, *ex absentia*, by considering cases in which the appropriate emotion is missing. On the face of it, someone who shows no sign of admiration and merely ‘shrugs away’ the protester’s display of courage intuitively fails to acknowledge the display as having the significance it does. Likewise, someone who does not grieve in the face of a serious loss invites the suspicion that she does not fully acknowledge her loss as such. And if you fail (because of false modesty, perhaps) to feel proud of yourself in the face of a genuine achievement, we may doubt whether you actually acknowledge what you have achieved as such. In cases like these, it does not seem unnatural to characterize the lack of emotion in terms of a failure of acknowledgment. Moreover, what we have in mind in giving this description, it seems, is precisely a failure to respond to a particular value in the appropriate way. If emotions are directed in the way I proposed, then it follows that this characterization generalizes to emotions across the board. That is, in responding with an emotion to an exemplification of its formal object by its intentional object one acknowledges the latter as an exemplification of the former in the sense I have been illustrating.

Now, there is a caveat that needs addressing. In the examples given so far to illustrate the relevant use of ‘acknowledge’, the description of the respective action or emotion as a way of acknowledging x as F plausibly implies that x is actually F . In acknowledging his colleagues as colleagues (the protesters as manifesting excellence), Peter (Maria) acknowledges them *for what they are (do)*. One might thus wonder whether my proposal accommodates also for emotions which are responses to values we merely seem to be aware of. However, ordinary discourse also features a related, non-factive usage of ‘acknowledge x as F ’, which covers these cases. Consider, for example, a sensitive art critic who has serious misgivings about the admiration of kitsch. To this critic, the admiration of kitsch is not just a sign of bad taste, but,

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as we might say, an inappropriate concession to kitsch's claim to artistic excellence. In acquiescing to this claim by feeling admiration we mistakenly acknowledge kitsch as artistically valuable by responding to it under the (false) guise of exemplifying artistic excellence. This is a case of acknowledging something as being some way which it is not. On this use of 'acknowledge x as F ', we acknowledge x as F by responding to x 's *apparent* F -ness in the manner appropriate to actual F s (or, alternatively, by acting, thinking or feeling towards x in the manner appropriate to actual F s for the reason that x purports to be an F).

I shall assume that this non-factive usage applies also to responses to values we are actually aware of. There is a natural sense in which in responding to values we are aware of, we are responding to the way things evaluatively appear to us. We can thus characterize all emotions as cases of acknowledgment in the sense of being ways of responding to apparent exemplifications of evaluative properties in the manner appropriate to their actual exemplification. Where an emotion is based on genuine awareness of value and thus a response to an actual exemplification of its formal object, it moreover qualifies as a way of acknowledging x as (dis)valuable in the factive sense that I illustrated first.

This account of emotional evaluation as acknowledgment offers an alternative to EV, which I shall call the Practical View of emotion (or PV, for short). This choice of label highlights the fact that in acknowledging something as F , we *put to use* rather than gain awareness (as) of x being F . The differences between EV and PV will become more salient once we spell out the specific role emotions play as forms of acknowledgment. As we will see shortly, the idea of acknowledging value provides resources for a novel, congenial understanding of the claim that emotions matter as evaluations. Before I explicitly take up this issue, though, let me briefly situate PV vis à vis a cognate proposal. This should also help further clarify the sense in which I propose to think of emotions as a form of acknowledgment.

Since acknowledging value is a matter of responsiveness to value we have antecedently registered, PV contrasts both with EV as well as with Solomon's version of judgmentalism.

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One might yet wonder how PV relates to a different version of judgmentalism defended by Nussbaum (2001). Like Solomon, Nussbaum conceives of emotions as evaluative judgments. However, on her view, emotions are not constitutive judgments, but ways we intellectually assent to an evaluative proposition. Since the notion of assent is clearly related to the notion of acknowledgment, PV can seem to come fairly close to her version of judgmentalism. Nussbaum (*ibid.*, chapter 1) in fact explicitly characterizes emotions a form of acknowledgment or recognition of value.

However, despite this obvious similarity, PV differs markedly from Nussbaum's view. Although we may think of judgmental assent as a form of acknowledgment, evaluative judgments are not responses to value in the relevant sense. In judging that p , we acknowledge p as true. Truth is the formal object of judgment and can plausibly be thought to play the same motivational and normative role with respect to doxastic attitudes as do value properties with respect to emotions.¹² It follows that judgment is plausibly conceived as a response to the (real or apparent) truth of a proposition in line with the (non-factive) explication of 'acknowledge x as F '. In this respect, however, it contrasts with emotions, which are responses to (real or apparent) value properties exemplified by entities that need not be propositionally structured. Even where the propositional content of a judgment is evaluative, what we are ultimately responsive to in judging this content is (apparent) truth, rather than (apparent) value (cf. Müller 2017, 304, 2019, 98f.).

This may sound like a fairly subtle difference. However, it follows from this that Nussbaum's view fails to capture what is distinctive to emotional acknowledgment. To see this, consider, once more, how we ordinarily use 'acknowledge' in saying e.g. of someone who remains unmoved by a serious loss that she does not fully acknowledge it as such. The impression which we express in this way usually persists upon learning that the person sincerely

¹² I support this view in Müller (*forthcoming*).

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judges that her loved one is lost forever. Intuitively, this is no substitute for being affected accordingly and the acknowledgment that comes with grief. In judging this, one does not respond to the loss in the way appropriate to it qua *loss*, but in the way appropriate to it qua *fact*. In forming this judgment, one is appropriately responsive to the truth of the proposition that her loved one is lost. This response is distinct from the emotional response merited by the incident's character as a loss.

As far as I can see, Nussbaum thus mistakes the acknowledgment characteristic of emotion for that characteristic of doxastic attitudes. PV instead recognizes emotions as a distinct, affective form of acknowledgment. In this way, it captures the important intuition that emotion is a form of acknowledgment without skidding over genuine psychological differences.¹³

4. How emotions matter

The example I have given to illustrate the distinction between judgmental and emotional acknowledgment resonates with the idea that emotions matter as evaluations: *ceteris paribus*, someone who acknowledges a serious loss as such by responding with grief is doing something important (indeed, something that is valuable over and above intellectually taking her loss for a fact). The significance we attach to emotion qua acknowledgment is indirectly highlighted also by cases in which we do not respond as would be appropriate when faced with the corresponding formal object. Such cases are aptly described as involving *failure* to give the appropriate response. In this way, they indirectly attest to the positive value of this response. On the face of it, PV thus seems to speak to the idea that emotions are valuable as evaluations. Yet what significance precisely can we accord to emotion qua acknowledgment of value?

¹³ Some opponents of judgmentalism argue that emotions constitute a *sui generis* assent to value. Cf. Helm (2001, chapters 2 and 3). Similarly, Furtak (2018, chapter 4) and Mitchell (2021, chapter 6) conceive of (at least some) emotions as an affective form of recognition of value. Since these authors also espouse EV, they do not get the notion of acknowledgment properly into focus, though. On Mitchell's view, cf. Müller & Döring (*forthcoming*).

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One prima facie plausible answer is based on the idea that responding appropriately to normative reasons is valuable. Since normative reasons speak in favour of a particular response, complying with their demands by responding accordingly might be thought to deserve positive appraisal: we judge an action or attitude that is a response to a corresponding normative reason as being *in good standing*.

A view of the value of emotion on these lines is offered by von Hildebrand (1953). While von Hildebrand does not explicitly describe emotions as ways of acknowledging value, his view echoes PV in that he thinks of them as appropriate responses to value. In line with the claim that formal objects are normative reasons, Hildebrand argues that specific values *merit* or *are due* a particular emotional or conative response (ibid., chapter 18; cf. also Hildebrand 1969, 39f.).¹⁴ Similarly taking his cue from cases of failure to respond appropriately, he proposes that a positive axiological relation (which he calls ‘harmony’) holds between a particular evaluative property and the appropriate response. As I read von Hildebrand, this relation obtains because, in giving values their due, we comply with demands they legitimately impose on us.

To avoid a possible misconception, it bears stressing that the notion of harmony differs from the notion of correctness that applies to intentional contents or representations more generally. Harmony concerns specific intentional states in their capacity as *attitudes*, rather than intentional contents. These specific attitudes are responses and, as such, can be evaluated in a way their contents cannot. Unlike representing qua feature of contents, responding is an activity and admits of appraisal as such.¹⁵ On Hildebrand’s view, we respond *well* if we think or feel what is appropriate in light of what makes it so.

¹⁴ von Hildebrand (1969, 1953) actually restricts this claim to responses to evaluative properties that are exemplified independently of the subject’s interests or concerns. I believe there are problems with this proposal, though I will here not be able to take up this issue. For a sustained defence of the view that concerns can be a genuine source of normative force, cf. Goldman (2009). Cf. also section 5.

¹⁵ In this connection, cf. also Engel (2013) on basing.

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When distinguished from the notion of representational correctness, this dimension of attitudinal appraisal speaks to the intuition that emotions matter qua acknowledgment. It is pre-theoretically plausible to suppose that someone who responds with grief to a loss, for example, is doing something important insofar as she thereby does justice to the demand of a particular disvalue. At the same time, there are reasons to doubt that, as it stands, this proposal is entirely satisfactory. It does not seem to make fully explicit what is intuitively significant about emotion qua acknowledgment.

Pretheoretically, a key feature of acknowledgment is that a certain status is conferred on what is acknowledged. In acknowledging something as being some way it thereby comes to *count* as being this way. Thus, in acknowledging his colleagues as such Peter seems to ascribe a certain status to them: for Peter, they count as his colleagues insofar as he acknowledges them as his colleagues in responding appropriately to them. Similarly, in acknowledging a serious loss as such by responding to this loss with grief, the loss acquires a particular standing. Since in responding in this way, we acknowledge the loss as a loss, it comes to count for us as a loss.¹⁶

When properly elucidated, this observation helps make explicit why emotions matter qua evaluative. In fact, the thought that a particular status is conferred on objects of emotion seems to me to be precisely what Solomon is picking up on in claiming that emotions imbue things with value. If this is right, then Solomon's account of what makes emotions significant can be shown to contain an important insight after all.

To get clear about this thought, some further remarks are in order about the status that is conferred in acknowledgment. Since 'count x as F ' has no lexically related noun in English, I shall use the term 'validity' to refer to this status. Accordingly, I shall say that in coming to count as F things we acknowledge as F acquire validity as F s. Since 'validity' can be used to mean different things, let me illustrate how intend the term to be understood. A helpful source

¹⁶ The same holds true of the non-factive use of 'acknowledge x as F ': in (mistakenly) acknowledging a piece of kitsch as artistically excellent, it comes to count for you as displaying artistic excellence.

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of examples, which looms large in Solomon's approach to emotion, is provided by jurisdiction. As will become clear in the remainder, jurisdiction (and related cases of political sanction) provide a useful model for this further aspect of the significance of emotional acknowledgment.

Consider, as a first example, pronouncements of guilt. According to Solomon (1993, 135), in declaring the defendant guilty the magistrate *makes* her guilty. For him this is a paradigm case of a constitutive judgment. As Roberts (1984) has convincingly argued in response, this view of jurisdiction seems mistaken, though. Someone is guilty of a crime by committing it, not by being declared guilty. Yet, Solomon is still correct to suppose that a certain status is conferred on the defendant by the magistrate's response. In responding to the defendant's crime by declaring her guilty, the magistrate acknowledges her guilt and makes it count as such by the standards of the law. As I use 'validity' (and its grammatical variants), her guilt is thereby legally validated.

A further example from the same (broader) domain is the administration of sanctions in response to being found guilty or, more generally, in response to acts of transgressing or upholding a norm. The political and economic sanctions taken against Russia by international institutions are taken in response to Russia's transgressing a norm against conquest. While they do not confer on Russia's attack the status of being transgressive, they bring it into disrepute qua transgression. In this respect, they come with a change in what I call 'validity': in being internationally acknowledged as a transgression in this way, the attack comes to 'bear the mark' of a breach of this norm by the standards of international politics. A contrasting case is the acknowledgment of efforts to uphold or safeguard this norm. By (positively) sanctioning such efforts, e.g. in awarding a peace prize, they are validated as acts of upholding this norm.

As should be clear from these examples, validity is a response-dependent property. Like evaluative properties on Solomon's view, it depends for its exemplification on specific responses. Importantly, it is response-dependent in comparatively strong sense, though. Thus, it differs from deontic response-dependent properties such as the property of meriting a

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particular attitude. This property is essentially related to a particular response, but, unlike validity, its exemplification by something does not depend on its being the target of actual responses. In this respect, validity contrasts also with evaluative properties on the view I have been working with. Insofar as these play the role of formal objects, they possess motivational and normative import that requires their instantiation to be independent of actual emotional responses to their bearers.

While this makes validity comparatively ‘cheap’, metaphysically speaking, it does not follow that it is philosophically uninteresting. The legal and political examples I have given clearly indicate that validity has practical import. Plausibly, this import is underwritten by the legal and political norms that are invoked in these cases. What seems notable about these norms is that, intuitively, the ascription of validity in these examples makes a difference not only to the status of a particular act qua violating or upholding them, but also on the status of *those very norms*. In acknowledging the transgression or upholding of a norm (by pronouncing guilt or administering sanctions) we *affirm* this norm.¹⁷ In doing so, we affirm the very standards that shape legal and political practice and in virtue of which such responses count as appropriate.

Something similar, I would like to propose, holds true of emotional responses. The importance which emotions possess according to PV is not a matter merely of compliance with the demands of value, but also resides in the affirmation of specific norms (or, more broadly, concerns) which govern much of our affective and practical lives and from which the respective formal object derives its force as a corresponding normative reason.

In the final section, I elaborate and support this proposal.

5. Affirming concerns

¹⁷ This is forcefully argued for, with a focus on international sanctions, by Daase (*unpublished*).

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To show that emotional acknowledgment has the same type of practical import as familiar political or legal responses it is helpful to look at a feature of the relation between emotions and formal objects, which has so far been left implicit. Considering this relation, we detect a close correspondence between the positive or negative character of the former (the emotion's valence) and the positive or negative character of the latter (the axiological character of the respective (dis)value). Thus, negative evaluative properties (e.g. danger) motivate and speak in favour of a particular negative emotional response (e.g. fear), while positive ones (e.g. excellence) motivate and speak in favour of a particular positive response (e.g. admiration). Accordingly, emotionally acknowledging something as exemplifying an evaluative property by responding appropriately requires responding with an emotion that corresponds in terms of its valence to the axiological character of this property.

This point is worth highlighting since there is a parallel here with the legal and political responses I have been discussing. That is, focusing on the particular case of sanctions, we find that there is a match between what we might call the 'valence' of the respective sanction (whether it is a positive or negative sanction) and the evaluative character of its object (qua transgression or upholding of a norm). Positive (negative) sanctions are responses to and made appropriate by acts that uphold (transgress) a norm. In these cases, too, validity is conferred on the exemplification of an evaluative property by responses that correspond in respect of their valence to the axiological character of this property.

This analogy indicates an important structural resemblance between emotions and sanctions. Indeed, it supports thinking of emotions as being themselves a type of sanction. This is not to say that emotions play the role specifically of legal or political sanctions. However, there is a broader notion of a sanction, on which a sanction amounts to the taking a positive or negative stand or position on something.¹⁸ This notion comprises legal and political sanctions,

¹⁸ In this connection, cf. Daase (*unpublished*).

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but plausibly also valenced attitudes. Thus, it seems intuitive to suppose that, in feeling admiration for the protesters, for example, Maria takes a favourable stand on them in response to their display of excellence. Her emotion qualifies as the taking of a positive stand insofar as the way she feels towards them is positive. In a similar vein, in fearing the decline of Ukraine's autonomy, Peter takes a disfavourable stand on this prospect in response to a threat to Ukraine's autonomy. His emotion qualifies as the taking of a negative position on this prospect insofar as the way he feels towards it is negative. As I have argued elsewhere, more substantive considerations on the valence of emotion support the view that emotions are position-takings inasmuch as they show them to be forms of approval or disapproval (Müller 2019, chapter 4). It is worth noting, though, that this view has been defended also irrespective of this substantive account of valence (cf. von Hildebrand 1969; Mulligan 2007; 2010).¹⁹ It seems that, as long as we suppose that emotions are positive or negative ways we feel towards something, we have reason to think of them as attitudes of (dis)favour. Thus construed, they share with political and legal sanctions the character of position-takings: in both cases, the response qua valenced qualifies as a sanction in this broader sense.

To further develop this parallel, note that there is also an analogue to the norms invoked in legal and political sanctions. In being attitudes of (dis)favour, emotions presuppose a background of concerns which provide a similar standard of conformity or congruence as do the norms invoked in legally or politically sanctioning norm-(in)congruent behaviour. For example, it is hard to make sense of Peter as taking the attitude of fear towards the prospect of Ukraine's losing its autonomy unless he is to some extent cares about its autonomy. That Peter is personally invested in this contributes to making sense of the way he feels about this prospect as being negative. Similarly, in understanding why Maria takes a favourable stand towards the protesters in feeling admiration for them, we presuppose that she cares about the courage

¹⁹ For a cognate proposal, cf. Poellner (2016), Mitchell (2021, chapter 4). An important difference is that both also endorse EV.

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displayed in this case. In both of these cases, these respective care or concern is crucial to the intelligibility of the emotion. A plausible explanation of this is that this concern provides the standard according to which the object of the emotion is pre-emotionally evaluated (cf. Nussbaum 2001; Reizenzein 2009; Müller 2019, 43ff., 79ff.). Thus, it seems plausible that, in responding with fear to the present threat to Ukraine's autonomy, Peter is responding to its negative bearing on Ukraine's autonomy *as an object of care*. In fearing Ukraine's loss of independence, he disfavours this prospect qua incongruent with his concern for Ukraine's independence. Similarly, Maria's admiration can be understood as a response to the display of a particular form of excellence (courage) qua conforming to what she cares about. Maria positively sanctions a certain way the protester's behaviour is congruent with this concern. Thus understood, the role of concerns in these cases mirrors the role norms play in assessing targets of legal and political sanctions: what makes sense of the valence of the sanction taken in response to a type of behaviour is the behaviour's congruence or incongruence with the relevant norm.

This further analogy is corroborated by the fact that norms and concerns serve as a source of normative force in both cases. It is appropriate to sanction norm-(in)congruent behaviour because the respective standard of congruence has a certain authority, i.e. the behaviour is a case of transgressing or upholding a *norm*. Similarly, concerns underwrite the character of formal objects as reasons for emotion (cf. Müller 2021, 1072; cf. also Helm 2001, chapters 2 and 3). In line with a common view of instrumental reasons for action, we can conceive of the normative force of formal objects as deriving from the relevant concern. On this view, instrumental reasons owe their force to a specific concern or 'pro-attitude'. For example, given that I care about being tenured, the fact that applying for external funding will increase my chances of tenure speaks in favour of doing so. It favours this action since it is conducive to the satisfaction of a specific concern of mine. The same holds *mutatis mutandis* of the reasons provided by formal objects. Given that Peter cares about Ukraine's autonomy, the danger to

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Ukraine's autonomy speaks in favour of taking an attitude of fear towards the prospect of its loss. This danger owes its authority as a reason for fear to what is at stake for Peter. Similarly, if Maria cares about civil courage, the courage displayed by Ukrainian protesters speaks in favour her admiring their protests in virtue of the way they positively relate to her concern. In this respect, the way normative force is conferred on formal objects by concerns resembles the authority conferred on the evaluative properties to which we respond with legal or political sanctions. In each case, their normative force derives from the authority of a specific standard of congruence. In the specific case of formal objects, this standard is authoritative since it is implied by what we are invested in.

If these remarks on valence and formal objects are on the right lines, it becomes plausible to think of the importance of emotions as being on a par with that of legal and political sanctions in respect of how they bear on the standing of their sources of appropriateness. More specifically, in both cases, we can think of the respective norm or concern as being *affirmed* in positively (negatively) responding to things under the evaluative aspect of (in)congruence with it. Since the normative force with which we comply in responding to this (dis)value derives from the norm or concern, we can think of the action or emotion as being responsive also to this very norm or concern. That is, we act or feel as we do *on account of* a norm or concern qua standard of congruence and respond in a way which is *made appropriate by* this standard of congruence. It follows that our response not only qualifies as an acknowledgment of something as possessing the corresponding evaluative property, but also as an acknowledgment of the relevant norm (concern) itself: we confer validity on it by responding to this norm (concern) in the manner appropriate to its implicit standard of congruence.²⁰ Crucially, this is not a matter of taking a *further* positive or attitude specifically towards the norm or concern. Rather, its authority is acknowledged indirectly in positively or negatively sanctioning (in)congruence

²⁰ In contrast to the former acknowledgment, the latter is always factive: in responding to the norm (concern) qua standard of congruence in the way appropriate to it qua standard of congruence, we acknowledge it for what it is.

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with it. However, while the positive or negative stand we take is not directed at this norm (concern), there is yet a respect in which our response bears positively on its status. Since we take a positive stand towards things that appear congruent with it and a negative stand towards things that appear incongruent with it, acknowledging this norm (concern) is at the same time a way of affirming it.

The picture of the significance of emotions which emerges in light of this parallel traces their value to their character as responses to normative reasons. Yet it goes beyond the idea that responding appropriately to normative reasons is valuable. Taking into account both the valence of emotion and the source of the values to which emotions are responsive, it ties their significance to the status they confer as responses to reasons. As forms of evaluative acknowledgment, emotions confer validity on exemplifications of their formal object and the concerns that render them authoritative as reasons. In this way, they affirm the very standards which shape the way we affectively and practically engage with the world.

6. Conclusion

I assessed the currently dominant version of the view that emotions are evaluations and valuable for this reason. According to this version, emotions are epistemically valuable in virtue of apprehending value properties of their intentional object. I argued that this account misconceives the intentionality of emotion and suggested an alternative view of emotional evaluation, according to which emotions are ways of acknowledging their objects as (dis)valuable. This alternative conceives of emotions as responses to normative reasons constituted by values and comes with a different, non-epistemic conception of their own value. On this conception, emotions matter because they validate values and the concerns from which these values derive their force as normative reasons. Elaborating this idea by drawing a comparison with legal and political sanctions, I argued that in feeling emotions we affirm these

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concerns in a manner analogous to the way norms are affirmed in sanctioning norm-(in)congruent behaviour.

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