

Emotions as Value Enablers¹

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For a philosopher interested like I am in issues surrounding our access to values and the role played by emotions therein, Toni's continuing exploration of the FA analysis is a constant source of inspiration. I take the opportunity to express my merited and right-kind-of-reasons-responsive gratitude, Toni.

In this paper, I wish to focus on an intriguing claim that Toni recently put forwards in joint work with Wlodek Rabinowicz in reply to a worry raised by the FA analysis of value. Let me start with a probably unnecessary reminder. The FA analysis claims that values are nothing over and above what makes attitudes merited or fitting.² The funny, for instance, would come down to what merits amusement; the offensive to what merits anger. There are many distinct families of values, and I shall concentrate on "emotional values", i.e. values for which the FA analysis looks most attractive, as their relation to specific psychological attitudes – emotions – is obvious (the funny, the offensive, the shameful, the sad, the hopeful, the regrettable, etc.).

The worry to which Toni replies is that the FA analysis fosters a revisionary understanding of these values. Pre-theoretically, values are "located in" the objects to which we attribute them: funniness is the property of a joke, shamefulness the property of a deed. By analysing emotional values in terms of merited emotions, the FA analysis would force us to shift from this pre-theoretical conception to a relational understanding of these values. Toni's reply consists in claiming that the worry misconstrues the role of emotions in the FA analysis. According to him, the worry presupposes that the FA analysis conceives of emotions as *sources of value*, while it actually conceives of them as *enablers* for the relevant properties of the object (the joke, the deed, etc.) to constitute values.

I am aware that there is a lot to unpack here, and I shall try my best to do so in what follows. I wish to focus on the distinction between source of value and value enabler because I agree with Toni that it is key to the development of an attractive FA analysis. However, its application to the relation

¹ I am grateful to Julien Deonna, Roberto Keller, Julia Langkau, Robert Pál-Wallin and Jakob Werkmäster for their comments on a previous version of this paper.

² In what follows, I shall mostly deal with the metaphysical aspect of the FA analysis. For a discussion of the role of emotions in value concepts, see Deonna and Teroni (2021).

between emotions and emotional values raises complex issues. In particular, we should wonder as to how exactly emotions function as value enablers. And how does one's approach to that issue relate to the project at the core of the FA analysis, i.e. that of demystifying value through psychological attitudes?

My aim in what follows is to assess whether advocates of the FA analysis are well-advised to respond to the aforementioned worry in terms of the contrast between sources of value and value enablers. It is not to assess the FA analysis in light of other criticisms, such as the traditional Wrong Kind of Reasons objection (Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004) or the more recent explanatory objection put forwards by Francesco Orsi and Andrés Garcia (2021, 2022). The discussion is structured as follows. §1 lays out the worry that the FA analysis fosters a revisionary understanding of emotional values. §2 introduces the distinction between enablers and favourers and how it is pressed into service by Toni to reply to this worry. While I agree that the reply is attractive, since casting emotions in the role of enablers chimes well with how we pre-theoretically understand the relations between emotions and values, I observe that doing so requires that we tackle two connected issues. First, how do emotions function as value enablers? Second, is the resulting picture compatible with the FA analysis? The rest of the discussion is structured around these issues. §3 looks at the role of emotions within the FA analysis so as to specify the kind of enabling role they can play. On this backdrop, I explore in §4 a contrast between how belief relates to truth and how emotions relate to values, a contrast which helps uncover what we are after. A first reaction to this contrast, according to which emotions are value enablers by allowing us to access values, which differ from truth, is examined in §5. I argue that this idea cannot do justice to the key insight of the FA analysis. §6 defends an alternative idea, according to which emotions are enablers in virtue of their attitudinal shapes.

§1 Overcounted Adicity

Pre-theoretically, we conceive of ascriptions of emotional values to objects as being made true or false by the intrinsic properties of these objects. Whether or not a joke is funny or a painting fascinating, say, has to do with their respective intrinsic properties. This is manifest in the fact that, when challenged, we are not tempted to consider anything but the joke or the painting in order to justify our claim that it is funny or fascinating. Of course, we acknowledge the existence of "relational" or "personal" values (Rønnow-Rasmussen 2011): we admit that something may be shameful, threatening or hopeful only for some people (in virtue of their specific physical or

psychological constitution, etc.). We conceive of ascriptions of personal values as being made true by properties of the object and its relation to the relevant people – and nothing else.³

Whether we focus on intrinsic or on relational value, the worry is that the FA analysis fixes the adicity of value one unit too high. How so? The FA analysis claims that an object has a value if and only if it merits an attitude. This suggests that it understands what we pre-theoretically conceive as a monadic value in terms of a relation between the object and the attitude that it merits. Here is the worry expressed by Jonathan Dancy, who targets an FA analysis in terms of reasons: “The reason for supposing that goodness is less polyadic than reasons is that reasons belong to, are for individuals.” (Dancy 2000: 170) Whether it appeals to reasons, merit or fittingness, the worry is that the FA analysis makes the presence of goodness and of specific thick values depend on certain entities in a way that does not correspond to our pre-theoretical understanding of them (Stratton-Lake 2013: 91). What we conceive as a monadic property (adicity 1) comes out as a two-term relation (adicity 2) between that object and an attitude. According to the FA analysis, funniness would be a relation between the properties of a remark and the amusement that it merits. Similarly, what we conceive as a personal value – and so, as a relation between an object and a subject (adicity 2) – comes out as a three-term relation (adicity 3) between an object, a subject and an attitude. A threat would be a relation between a nearby wolf, say, Toni and the fear that the situation merits.

The worry is substantial. While a philosophical account of an entity may somewhat deviate from the folk understanding of it, we are ready to tolerate more significant deviations for some entities (natural kinds, say) than for others (mental states, perhaps). Values seem to belong to the second category.⁴ If the “overcounted adicity” objection is along the right track, the FA analysis indeed fosters a revisionary understanding of value. In addition, a commonly advertised selling point of the FA analysis is its neutrality vis-à-vis many substantial issues in the philosophy of value (Orsi 2015,

³ Some (emotional) values are neither intrinsic nor relational. It would for instance be regrettable if an employee of the Massachusetts Historical Society were to inadvertently throw Abraham Lincoln’s pen into the dustbin. The disvalue of this act is not grounded in the intrinsic properties of the pen, yet may not be a relational value either as it may be regrettable for everyone. Such values raise important questions, but they do not – as far as I can see – affect the points I am going to make. Thanks to Robert Pál-Wallin for having drawn my attention to this issue.

⁴ This goes against some forms of naturalism, which understand value on the model of natural kinds (Copp 2007). I shall rest content here with observing that a natural kind inspired approach to value would probably dissolve the overcounted adicity objection rather than take it seriously.

Rønnow-Rasmussen 2022). This alleged neutrality is undermined if the FA analysis rules out the very intelligibility of monadic value.

A natural reaction to the foregoing proceeds as follows. Perhaps the objection under discussion threatens the FA analysis of the thin values of the good and the bad, as well as of some thick values (justice and lewdness, say), but why on earth would it threaten the FA analysis of the emotional values on which we have decided to concentrate? One may after all insist that an FA analysis of these values cannot qualify as revisionary as “there is hardly any lexical room for anyone to disagree with a version of FA restricted to such value properties.” (Orsi and Garcia 2021: 1220) This reaction is correct as far as the existence of a constitutive relation between emotional values and emotions is concerned: reference to the emotions in the analysis of emotional values should not come as a surprise. Still, as we shall realize in §2, the FA analysis would also run against the folk understanding of emotional values if it were to cast emotions and properties of the object on an equal footing as sources of value. One gets a whiff of the different roles played by these factors by contrasting these two claims: “the joke is funny because of its timing and incongruity” and “the joke is funny because it merits amusement”.

So, the FA analysis faces the overcounted adicity objection. According to Toni, it can steer clear of this objection by appealing to a distinction between sources of value and value enablers, a distinction to which I now turn.

§2 Enablers as Rescue Team

In a recent paper co-written with Wlodek Rabinowicz, Toni replies to the overcounted adicity objection (Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2021).⁵ Here is how I understand the reply. The objection would be premised on a mistaken understanding of the role psychological attitudes play within the FA analysis. The mistake consists in thinking that, according to the FA analysis, attitudes are *sources of value*, i.e. that from which an object’s value (partly) originates. The FA analysis does not (or at least should not) cast attitudes in the role of sources of value, the reply continues, but

⁵ One caveat. Toni’s response is actually directed at Orsi and Garcia’s (2021, 2022) explanatory objection to the FA analysis. I shall excise the appeal to the distinction between sources of value and value enablers from its role in addressing this objection. What interests me is the very idea that emotions are value enablers.

rather in the role of *value enablers*.⁶ Since the key notion of an enabler is borrowed from Dancy's seminal discussion (Dancy 2004: chap.3), let us first try to get a grip on how Dancy understands it.⁷

It helps to follow Dancy's steps and focus first on the contrast between enabler and favourer in the realm of reasons. A favourer is a consideration that speaks in favour of something. To take Dancy's own example, the fact that one promised to help a friend is a consideration that (defeasibly) speaks in favour of one's helping her. Similarly, the fact that it rained ten minutes ago is a consideration that (defeasibly) speaks in favour of believing that the streets are wet. Enablers play a different role, as they do not provide considerations in favour of the relevant action or attitude. In the case of the promise to help, one enabler mentioned by Dancy is the fact that the promise was not made under duress. According to him, this negative fact is not a consideration in favour of doing what one promised. It plays another role, that of enabling the promise to count in favour of doing what one promised. This enabling role is made manifest by the following counterfactual: if the promise had been made under duress, it would not speak in favour of doing what one promised. As regards the belief that the streets are wet, one may plausibly think of one's understanding of the concepts of a street and of wetness as enablers. One's understanding of these concepts does not play the same role as the fact that it rained ten minutes ago; it is not an additional consideration in favour of believing that the streets are wet. Understanding plays a different role, that of enabling the fact that it rained ten minutes ago to speak in favour of one's believing that the streets are wet. The enabling role of concept understanding is revealed by a parallel counterfactual: if one did not understand these concepts, the fact that it rained ten minutes ago would not speak in favour of one's believing that the streets are wet. In a nutshell, a variety of factors allow favourers to favour what they favour without themselves favouring. (Some of) these are enablers.

Armed with the distinction between favourers and enablers in the realm of reasons, let us now try to deploy it in the context of the FA analysis of value. This demands that we move from issues surrounding reasons to issues surrounding the ontology of value, as well as from relations between facts and attitudes to relations between attitudes and values. While we should in general be cautious in transposing claims from one of these domains to another, the transposition seems in the case at hand to proceed smoothly. Toni's strategy is to appeal to the distinction between favourers and

⁶ As Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen acknowledge, the distinction between source of value and value enabler is introduced by Orsi and Garcia (2021), who think that it is of no help to reply to their explanatory objection.

⁷ There is a dash of irony here: with the idea of an enabler, Dancy would have provided a way for the advocates of the FA analysis to respond to the overcounted adicity objection that he puts forwards.

enablers to avoid the worry that the FA analysis fixes the adicity of value one unit too high. This strategy has it that the worry is premised on an understanding of the FA analysis according to which attitudes play the role of favourers or sources of value. This is wrong-headed, Toni claims, since the FA analysis casts attitudes in the role of value enablers. True, the FA analysis has it that an object would not have a given value (a joke would not be funny) save for the existence of the relevant attitude (amusement). However, we realized that the truth of this counterfactual may reveal that the attitude enables the relevant properties of the object to be the sole source of its value. As regards the joke, the idea is that amusement enables the joke's timing and incongruity to constitute its funniness. The source of fun thus remains squarely within the boundaries of the joke; funniness comes out as a monadic value.

Recall the contrast that we met in §1 between two claims about amusement: "the joke is funny because of its timing and incongruity" and "the joke is funny because it merits amusement". The distinction between source of value and value enabler allows us to diagnose what governs this intuitively grasped contrast: the first claim refers to sources of funniness, the second to what enables these properties to function as such sources. So, casting attitudes in the role of enablers not only holds the promise of preserving the adicity of values, it also corresponds to how we pre-theoretically think about the emotions and their relation to values. Suppose that someone challenges your claim that a joke is funny or that a painting is fascinating. In response, it is awkward if not downright misguided to refer to your emotions (Deonna and Teroni 2012). "Look, the joke amused me" and "I was fascinated by the painting" do nothing to vindicate your initial verdicts. The idea that emotions are enablers offers a convincing explanation of why this is so. Responses to such normative challenges that refer to emotions are awkward because the challenger is after the source of an object's value. The response he gets does not comply with that request, since it refers to an enabler. The situation is structurally similar to the one in which you ask a friend why she thinks that the streets are wet and she replies that she understands the relevant concepts. Hardly what you are after, even if it turns out that this understanding enables the fact that it rained ten minutes ago to favour your friend's belief.

Let me emphasize two essential aspects of the relation between emotions and values that the "emotions as enablers" claim nicely takes into account. The first aspect is normative. Your initial attribution of value (the joke is funny) has already informed the challenger that you think of the object as meriting a given emotion (amusement). So, responding to the challenge by pointing out that the object elicited that emotion is unsatisfactory. Casting emotions in the role of value enablers nicely explains why this is so. The second aspect is psychological. The fact that an object has elicited an emotion is rarely part of our perspective when we attribute values to objects (compare Dancy

2004: 46 on belief). True, we sometimes start reflecting on the value that an object may have by realizing that it engaged us emotionally. This hardly qualifies as the basic case, however: emotions rather tend to directly elicit value judgements about objects without a detour through such a reflexive process. And, even when reflexivity takes place, the way we think about the emotions supports the idea that they function as enablers. We may start reflecting on the object's value by realizing that we reacted emotionally to it, but we then try to locate which features of the object could support this emotional verdict. This again chimes well with the idea that emotions are value enablers.

§3 Emotions in the FA Analysis

We have realized how attractive the claim that emotions are value enablers is: it holds the promise of solving the overcounted adicity objection and corresponds to the way we pre-theoretically think about the emotions. Yet, to deliver on this promise, we need to know more about the role of emotions in the FA analysis. What exactly does the enabling role of emotions consist in? Is this role compatible with the FA analysis of values in terms of merited emotions? The difficulty is compounded by the fact that, as Joseph Raz emphasizes, “the category of being an enabler is very diverse”, so diverse in fact that there may well be “no theoretically interesting common feature among the roles which enablers perform” (Raz 2006: 106). This is not surprising, as our grip on enablers is mainly negative: enablers are not sources of value but factors that have to be in place so that sources of value function as such. Fortunately, we can further specify the enabling role of emotions in light of the account of value characteristic of the FA analysis.

The first thing to appreciate is that, while there are contingent enablers (the fact that I did not exercise may contingently enable a situation to be threatening, something which may also have been enabled by the fact that I broke my ankle, etc.), emotions cannot be cast in such a contingent role. According to the FA analysis, emotions are key to what emotional values are. The relation between a given emotion and a value is thus necessary. Nothing would be funny if there was no amusement, nothing would be fascinating if there was no fascination.⁸ Moreover, the FA analysis aims at explaining values in terms of more basic constituents of reality: emotions and the non-evaluative properties of their objects that merit these emotions account for values, not the other way around.⁹

⁸ Amusement need not exist “in all worlds” where there is funniness (Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2021) – the FA analysis typically proceeds in counterfactual terms.

⁹ Toni expresses at many places his understanding of the FA analysis as an analysis *stricto sensu*, as opposed to the “no-priority view” championed for instance by Wiggins (1987).

None of this threatens the claim that emotions are enablers: there are necessary enablers (one's capacity to discharge them may be a necessary enabler of duties) and an enabler may be a more primitive component of reality than what it enables (same example). Neither is the claim that emotions are enablers in tension with the fact that emotional value concepts "wear their emotional origin on their sleeves", so to say. This may well be what we should expect for necessary enablers. For instance, the concept of duty is partly structured around the "ought implies can" principle, and this despite the fact that a subject's capacity to act does not favour but enables. Similarly, the fact that values such as the funny, the fascinating, etc. parade their relations to emotions is not in tension with the claim that these emotions are (necessary) enablers.

The obvious relation between emotions and emotional values should lead us to insist on two points. The first is that this fact reveals that emotions are manifest in consciousness. This is perhaps best shown by appreciating how the FA analysis of values differs from a dispositionalist account of colours (e.g., Cohen 2009). The latter should come (and is typically sold) as a surprise – nothing in our pre-theoretical apprehension of colours makes such a connection with visual experience obvious. This contrasts with the FA analysis of emotional values. One explanation of this difference that I pursued elsewhere with Julien Deonna starts with the observation that visual experience is transparent, whereas emotional experience is typically opaque. Contrary to what happens in visual experience, we can focus our attention on emotional experience (the experience of amusement or fear, for instance) rather than on what this experience is about (a joke, a nearby wolf). The fact that emotions are opaque means that they are available as building blocks for the relevant value concepts (Deonna and Teroni 2021). The second point bears upon the idea that the FA analysis appeals to constituents of reality that are claimed to be more basic than values. Emotions are our "entry point" into the realm of emotional values, since something has a value only insofar as it merits an emotion. This is well-trodden territory, but the point deserves emphasis as it is crucial for our discussion to build an understanding of emotions as value enablers that is in tune with the intimate relation between emotions and values, as the FA analysis portrays them.

Toni's own way of acknowledging these points while casting emotions in the role of value enablers leads him to bring up two possibilities:

One possibility would be that attitudes come with inherent standards—say, admiration comes with criteria that specify what is to be admired, or perhaps with paradigmatic examples—and that because of these standards some properties of objects (in virtue of which the objects satisfy or approximate the standards) become value-makers. Because of the inherent standards of admiration certain properties of an object make it admirable. But a more obvious and less contentious option is that the properties of an attitude enable the properties of the object to be value-makers simply because they determine the

nature of the value in question. Clearly, admirability is a value whose nature in part is determined by what the attitude of admiration consists in. Likewise, the nature of desirability in part is determined by the constitutive properties of desire, and so on. (Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2021: 2476-2477)

In his discussion, Toni's aim is not to flesh out these possibilities – the ideas of inherent standards and of value determination – in any detail, and I am not confident I fully understand them and how they relate to one another. What follows is an attempt to clarify these issues to get a grip on the role of emotions in the FA analysis, and on whether this role is compatible with the claim that they function as value enablers.

§4 Truth vs. Emotional Values

In this section, I shall focus on a natural strategy for developing the claim that emotions are value enablers thanks to their inherent standards and/or thanks to their contribution to value determination. The strategy consists in using the relations between belief and truth as one's model. While I shall argue that this model does not pay sufficient attention to the role of emotions in the FA analysis, its exploration will help illuminate what we are after.

The strategy is to flesh out the claim that emotions are value enablers by understanding the relation between emotions and values on the model of the relation between belief and truth. Here is how the strategy will unfold. There are facts, truths and beliefs. Belief is an attitude that is correct if and only if the proposition believed is true.¹⁰ Absent belief (or representation more generally), there would be facts, but there would be no truths. There are monadic facts, but there are no monadic truths: truths wear their relational nature on their sleeves. Talk of truth is talk of correspondence between beliefs and what is (the facts). There need be no actual belief for a fact to be a truth. Still, belief enables facts to constitute truths – a fact is a truth thanks to its corresponding to a belief. Misunderstanding of what truth is and of the dependence of truth on belief would lead one to systemically overcount the adicity of truths. A truth is always a fact, although the nature of truth is not to be found in the intrinsic properties of any fact that is a truth: it is rather to be found in the function of that fact – the function of being that against which the correctness of a belief is assessed. Belief is not a source of truth, although a detour via belief is needed for talk of truth to get traction. This is the sense in which belief enables facts to constitute truths.¹¹

¹⁰ I shall concentrate on this widespread idea and leave aside debated issues in the normativity of belief. On these issues, see Fassio (2015).

¹¹ Dummett's (1996: chap.2) claims regarding the origin of the concept of truth in the correctness of assertions have interesting similarities with these remarks on truth. I am indebted to Roberto Keller for this reference.

The two possibilities brought up by Toni to flesh out the claim that attitudes are enablers materialize in the relation between belief and truth. First, belief comes with inherent truth-related standards and it is in light of the foregoing observations attractive to claim that “because of the inherent standards of [belief] certain properties of [a fact] make it [a truth].” Second, these same observations also make a convincing case for the claim that “[truth] is a value whose nature is in part determined by what the attitude of [belief] consists in”. The temptation is thus strong to apply the model of the relations between facts, truths and beliefs to the relations between natural properties of objects, values and emotions.

Here is how the application proceeds. The relevant triad is now: intrinsic properties of objects, values and emotions. Emotions are attitudes that are correct if and only if their objects have specific values. Amusement is correct if and only if its object is funny, shame is correct if and only if its object is shameful, etc.¹² According to the FA analysis, absent the emotions, objects would have natural properties, but they would have no values. Talk of value is talk of attitudes that objects merit in virtue of their natural properties.¹³ In this sense, (possible) emotions enable talk of values. Misunderstanding of what value is and of its dependence on emotions would lead one to overcount the adicity of value. A (monadic) value is always a property of the relevant object, although the nature of value is not to be found in the intrinsic properties of any valuable object: it is rather to be found in the function of these properties – the function of being that against which the merit of emotions is assessed. Emotions are not sources of value, although a detour via emotions is needed for value talk to get traction.

As attractive as this application of the model of the relations between facts, truths and beliefs to the relations between natural properties, values and emotions may look at first sight, it would be a mistake to adopt it as part of an FA analysis. Put in the context of the FA analysis, this model suffers indeed from a fatal flaw, since it overlooks a basic difference in our apprehension of truths and of emotional values. The difference is this: truth is not the property of meriting belief, whereas there is, according to the FA analysis, no ontological gap between emotional values and what merits the relevant emotions (no gap between the funny and what merits amusement, for instance). The fact that truth is not what merits belief transpires from the discussions surrounding trivial truths, such as

¹² On this idea, which is common territory amongst different approaches to the emotions, see Deonna and Teroni (2022a).

¹³ This is the “buck-passing” account of value, according to which value does not give reasons for attitudes – only the properties on which value supervenes do (Scanlon 1998).

the proverbial number of sand grains on a beach. A trivial truth is a fact that does not merit belief (see e.g., David 2001).

This should lead us to distinguish two claims. The first claim is that talk of a given entity is talk of that entity in relation to a psychological attitude. If the foregoing is along the right track, truth is such an entity: truth talk is talk of facts in relation to beliefs. The second, stronger claim is that talk of this entity is structured around the idea of what merits this psychological attitude. This is not the case for truth: trivial truths are testimony to the fact that truth talk is not structured around the idea of what merits belief. Truth is a property that tallies with the functional approach sketched above: a truth is a fact insofar as that fact corresponds to a belief, but the psychological relatum of this relation does not feature centrally in our understanding of truths. The domain of truths is the domain of facts as these facts correspond to beliefs, but we often speak of truths independently of their relation to merited beliefs.

This is why we should not apply this model to the relation between natural properties, values and emotions. According to the FA analysis, there is in the value domain no distinction that parallels that between truth and what merits belief. There are just the natural properties and the value: funniness and the fascinating are not properties that need to be refined, so to say, into what merits amusement and fascination – they are the very properties of meriting these emotions.¹⁴ Something that is too bland to be amused by is not fun, something that is too superficial to merit shame is not shameful, etc.¹⁵

There is thus an important contrast between truth and values: only in the latter case does the idea of merited attitudes structure our basic understanding of the relevant entities. So, if emotions are not sources of value but value enablers, this cannot be assimilated to the claim that beliefs enable facts

¹⁴ This is often supported by the so-called “shapelessness” of values vis-à-vis non-evaluative properties – roughly, the idea that there is no unity to the various constellations of natural properties that are instances of funniness or shamefulness. No unity, that is, except the one that they receive thanks to all meriting amusement or shame. On this issue, see Roberts (2011).

¹⁵ The existence of this contrast between truth and emotional values does not mean that the FA analysis implies that, all things considered, we should be amused by all funny jokes. The contrast only suggests that, whereas a proposition can be true without meriting belief, an object always has a value in virtue of meriting a response (even if, all things considered, we should not respond in this way). To put the point in another terminology, the FA analysis under discussion targets *pro tanto* value. I am indebted to Jakob Werkmäster for having insisted on this issue.

to be truths. This contrast is not to be taken lightly, since it reveals something crucial about values and how they differ from truth, as I shall argue in the next sections.

§5 Enabling as Accessing and its Limits

If our aim is to develop the idea that emotions are enablers in a way congenial to the FA analysis, how should we react to the contrast between truth and emotional values? In this section, I shall consider a first such reaction, which diagnoses the contrast in representational terms.

The reaction consists in claiming that the differing relations between belief and truth and between emotions and values are explained by the properties that belief and emotions respectively represent. According to this line of thought, the belief that *p* represents the truth of *p*, whereas emotions represent values – amusement represents the funniness of the joke, etc. The contrast at issue would be due to the fact that beliefs and emotions represent distinct properties: beliefs represent a property – truth – that differs from what merits belief (as is evidenced by trivial truths), whereas emotions represent values that are (as per the FA analysis) identical to what merits these emotions. Call this the “pure access” account.

This account allows us to implement the claim that emotions are enablers in the following way. Talk of value is talk of normativity. Now, the fact that a normative claim bears on a subject presupposes that he accesses the relevant entities. Consider a rather uncontroversial example: if you ought to mow the lawn today, you are in a position to access that fact (or at least have been in a position to access it). Of course, we cannot transpose what holds for obligations directly to the relations between emotions and values, as the FA analysis under discussion does not equate emotional values with what *ought* to elicit a given emotion, but rather with what *merits* to elicit it.¹⁶ Still, one may insist that something merits a response from a subject only if this subject can access it. Emotions would allow properties of their objects – the sources of value – to function as such by providing the sort of access that is a precondition of value talk. A remark may be incongruous and have a specific timing without anyone accessing it, a canvas may exemplify forms and colours without anyone accessing them. However, the funny and the fascinating, being normative properties constituted by a relation of merit between these properties and an emotion, presuppose that the relevant subjects

¹⁶ The FA analysis is rarely laid out in terms of obligations, because emotions are not directly subject to the will. On this issue, see Gert (2003) and Svavarsdóttir (2014).

access these properties. Emotions are value enablers in virtue of providing such an access. And they are necessary value enablers because we cannot access the relevant properties in any other way.¹⁷

This understanding of the contrast between truth and emotional values in terms of representation and the associated pure access account chime well with a widespread approach according to which emotions are representations of values (e.g., Milona 2016, Tappolet 2016). Whatever its merits¹⁸, it will not do in the present context, which consists in trying to combine the idea that emotions are enablers with the FA analysis.

Casting emotions in the role of pure access providers indeed goes against the spirit of the FA analysis. Advocates of the FA analysis – and John McDowell (1985) in particular – have emphasized that it differs from dispositionalism since it does not refer to the responses that an entity tends to generate, but to the responses that it merits. This is difficult to square with the idea that emotions are enablers in virtue of providing access to value. To see why, observe that when we talk of merit in the mental realm, we do so only in relation to emotions, desires and, perhaps, beliefs.¹⁹ What do these mental states have in common? Their primary business seems to be that of *responding to what we represent*, rather than that of representing: emotions, desires and beliefs are reactions to what we apprehend perceptually or otherwise.²⁰ They contrast with mental states which are in the business of representing – which are pure access providers – and to which the notion of merit does not apply. Consider two central cases: perception as a way of accessing our surroundings and (episodic) memory as a way of accessing our personal past. In both cases, the notion of merit fails to get a grip: colours, shapes, forms and past events are not entities that we understand by reference to what merits to be perceived or remembered.

So, there seems to be an essential relation between the notion of merit and psychological reactions. Why is that so? Well, to merit is to deserve or to be worthy of a response, on account of some properties. And the properties to which the response responds must somehow be represented – otherwise we would not face a (merited) response, but a mere coincidental cooccurrence. It is thus no surprise that mental states can be related to the merit relation only when they react to the

¹⁷ This last claim raises a number of issues in the epistemology of emotion that I cannot enter into here. For a discussion, see Deonna and Teroni (2022b).

¹⁸ I assess them e.g., in Deonna and Teroni (2012: chap.6).

¹⁹ Merit seems to qualify belief only if we allow some stretching – “merits belief” seems to refer to trust rather than to propositional belief.

²⁰ The fact that emotions are reactions is at the centre of the approaches defended in Deonna and Teroni (2012, 2022), Müller (2019) and Mulligan (2007).

representation of such properties. Desire qualifies because it is a reaction of pursuing what one apprehends perceptually or otherwise. The same is true of the emotions, which also react to our apprehension of their objects – one is sad about an event one remembers, amused by a remark one hears or fascinated by a painting one sees.

Another way to drive the point home is to emphasize that the pure access account gives with one hand what it takes back with the other. It claims that emotions represent a property that merits to be responded to in a given way. However, in casting the emotions in the role of representing what merits to be responded to in such a way, the account prevents the emotions to constitute these responses. This is the case because, when we say that a joke is funny, we certainly don't (only or primarily) say that it merits to be represented. This would hardly make sense and would completely neglect the specific contribution of emotions: the fact that they are ways of (dis)favouring, which advocates of the FA analysis (and Toni in particular)²¹ rightly put at the centre of their account of value.

All in all, we should not cast emotions in the enabling role of pure access providers – this fails to do justice to the idea of merit at the centre of the FA analysis. Is it possible to preserve the idea that emotions are enablers while insisting on the fact that they are responses to what we represent? The last section is devoted to this issue.

§6 Enabling via Attitudinal Shape

Let us trace back our steps a little. There is an important contrast between truth and emotional values. A first reaction is to claim that this contrast derives from what beliefs and emotions respectively represent. We have concluded that this reaction and its companion pure access account of the emotions does not do justice to the key insight of the FA analysis. I now wish to put forward an alternative reaction according to which the contrast at issue is rather due to the fact that emotions have attitudinal shapes that importantly differ from that of belief.

In a nutshell, the pure access account is unsatisfactory because it misunderstands what we mean when we say that an object merits an emotion: we do not thereby mean that it merits to be represented. We rather mean that the emotion somehow “does justice” to the object. Can we develop this idea in less metaphorical terms? I think that we can if we take into consideration the rich attitudinal shapes of emotions.

²¹ Toni acknowledges (2022: 128-129) that his previous attempt to connect the notion of merit to representational content is not satisfactory. His suggestion to connect it instead to psychological modes corresponds to the account in terms of attitudinal shapes that I shall present in the next section.

How best to characterize emotional shapes? We should do so by emphasizing the essential relations between emotions and attention. When we undergo an emotion, our cognitive resources are channelled towards its object so as to prepare us to deal with it in a specific way – emotions are partly constituted by distinct action tendencies (Deonna and Teroni 2012, Frijda 2007, Scarantino 2014). In fear, our body is mobilized to neutralize something; in anger, it is mobilized for a form of active hostility; in shame, for moving away from the gaze of others; in fascination, for further exploring an object that we may have difficulties in fully grasping. These ways of dealing with the object can take place at the level of behaviour and/or thought. Now, these emotional responses essentially take time, and the time that they take is a function of the aims of the emotions, which consist in modifying or maintaining a given relation with an object. Emotions are individuated by a system that organizes consciousness and channels it towards fulfilling these aims. In fear, this takes place within an organization of the subject's resources to avoid a threat; in sadness, these resources are organized to cope with a loss; in fascination, to further explore an object for its own sake, etc.

The foregoing observations suggest that the notion of merit applies to the emotions because they organize and occupy consciousness in specific processual ways. This sounds terribly abstract, but it actually chimes well with how we pretheoretically conceive of value, and constitutes one key asset of the FA analysis. Our conception of emotional values is essentially the conception of what merits to occupy consciousness and attention in specific ways. A threat is something that merits to be avoided, an offense something that merits to be righted, the funny what merits to be laughed at. And when we deplore a lack of emotion in ourselves or others, we claim that an object merits to occupy consciousness in a given way. We thus assess whether emotions are correct as a function of whether their objects merit to occupy consciousness in these ways (Deonna and Teroni 2021). There can be too little or too much fear directed at a threat, as there can be too little or too much amusement directed at a joke – “too little” and “too much” cover here the intensity as well as the duration of emotional processes.

This contrasts sharply with the way we assess intellectual states like judgements and beliefs, where these ideas fail to get a grip (Na'aman 2021). Failing to realize this is the fundamental shortcoming of the pure access account discussed in §5. As Sigrún Svavarsdóttir writes regarding our criticism of unmerited emotions,

The alleged mistake is not that of misrepresentation but, rather, that of misplacement of emotional and motivational energies. It is some kind of misplacement or waste of emotional and motivational resources to train them on an object of little or no value. That is, I submit, the drift of the criticism. (Svavarsdóttir 2014: 89)

Talk of what merits emotions is talk of what merits to occupy consciousness in specific ways. Still, we have observed above that, in order to qualify as (merited) responses to some properties of objects,

emotions should not simply cooccur with the representation of these properties. Do emotions qualify as such responses? They do, insofar as they display the relevant sensitivity to evidence – and it seems plausible to think that amusement is sensitive to fun-related considerations, anger to offense-related considerations, etc. (Deonna and Teroni 2022a). If this is along the right track, we can maintain that emotions are ways of responding to objects – of favouring or disfavouring them – to which the notion of merit applies.

The final question is: how does the claim that emotions are enablers fare in relation to this characterization of their attitudinal shapes? Recall the two possibilities that Toni puts forward to flesh out the claim that attitudes are enablers: the first refers to the idea that attitudes come with inherent standards, the second to the idea that values are partly determined by the relevant attitudes. What we have just said about the attitudinal shapes of emotions and their sensitivity to evidence supports the idea that some properties of objects – the incongruity and timing of remarks, the distribution of forms and colours on canvas, etc. – are sources of values because of the existence of emotions with specific attitudinal shapes and inherent standards. Emotions have some plasticity, as they can be directed towards new objects – the plausible claim that we are endowed with different sensibilities (to the funny, the shameful, the fascinating, etc.) that evolve during our lives requires that much. But this plasticity is restricted – in order to engage our emotional responses, these new objects must relate, by several intermediate steps perhaps, to “paradigmatic scenarios” (de Sousa 1987, D’Arms and Jacobson 2010). The paradigmatic scenario for anger may be situations that constitute unjustified encroachments on the ends that we pursue (jostling someone, intrusion in our private space, etc.); that of amusement may be of the “slipping on a banana peel” or of the “grossly breaking a social norm” variety; that of fear situations in which we are at the mercy of a predator.

The plasticity of emotions is moderate and anchored in these paradigmatic scenarios precisely because the attitudinal shapes of emotions are determinate: emotions are never thin favourings or disfavourings, they are always determinate ways of doing so that lend themselves to the sorts of descriptions sketched above.²² This puts substantial constraints on what can merit a given emotional response. Almost any fact can be believed, almost any situation can be desired, but only quite specific objects or situations can be responded to with fear, anger, amusement, fascination or shame. It is in these determinate attitudinal shapes that we should anchor the function of emotions to partly determine emotional values. The restricted plasticity of emotions allows them to trace relatively stable and interpersonally recognizable paths through the space of natural properties, and

²² This chimes well with Toni’s appeal to thick attitudes (Rønnow-Rasmussen 2022: 82).

the properties that make up these paths are disunified except for the fact that they merit these specific forms of attention.²³ As opposed to this, belief displays no restricted plasticity and its shape is much less determinate than those of the emotions. This may well be the source of the contrast between truth and what merits belief. Whatever the final verdict about belief, the two possibilities mentioned by Toni turn out, at least in the case of the emotions and their relation to values, to be two faces of the same coin.

Conclusion

Starting with the worry that the FA analysis fosters a revisionary understanding of values, I explored different ways of combining Toni's response to this worry – emotions do not function as sources of value but as value enablers – with the FA analysis. I have emphasized a contrast between the way belief relates to truth and the way emotions relate to values and examined two reactions to this contrast. I have argued that the first reaction, according to which emotions enable by granting access to values, is unattractive and have endorsed a second reaction, according to which emotions enable thanks to their attitudinal shapes.

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²³ You may remember the aforementioned claim (ftn14) that values are shapeless vis-à-vis non-evaluative properties. In the present context, it should be developed as follows. The source of value of each concrete instance of a monadic emotional value lies in the natural properties of an object. But what unifies the various constellations of relevant natural properties – what makes them qualify as instances of a given emotional value – is their relation of merit to the attitudinal shape of an emotion, which functions as an enabler.

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