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Abstract	Although Davidson has never written specifically on emotions, we can reconstruct his views from his writings on attitudes and values. He defends a causal version of the cognitive theory of emotions which he associates to an objective conception of values. I confront his account of the correctness of emotions with the fitting attitude view of the relation of emotions and value. They can be reconciled if the correctness of an emotion is construed as a form of idealization.	
Keywords (separated by '-')	Davidson - Emotions - Justification - Values - Fitting attitudes - Correctness	

Davidson on Emotions and Values



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1 **Abstract** Although Davidson has never written specifically on emotions, we can
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9 1 Introduction

10 Donald Davidson is a philosopher. By this I mean that his views were meant to be
11 systematic and to be related not only to his own views and to other topics on which
12 he wrote, but also to all important issues within philosophy as a whole, even when
13 he did not spell out his positions explicitly. This makes him unique among other
14 analytic philosophers, at a time when over-specialization is more or less the rule.
15 This was the case with his conceptions on ethics and meta-ethics, on which he did
16 not write very much, but which we can reconstruct (Davidson 2004; Myers 2004,
17 2013; Engel 2017). This is also the case with his views on emotions. In this essay,
18 I shall first recall the background of contemporary theories of emotion. Then I shall
19 try to reconstruct Davidson's analysis of emotions, and to discuss how it relates to his
20 conception of value. Then I shall, more speculatively, try to spell out to what extent

This chapter is in its final form and it is not submitted to publication anywhere else.

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21 his views can answer some of the problems that have been raised by recent theorists
 22 of emotions. I shall suggest that Davidson's views could have been compatible with
 23 a specific conception of the fitting analysis of the relation between emotions and
 24 values.

25 **2 The Background of Contemporary Views on Emotions**

26 There have been, within contemporary analytic philosophy, quite a number of theo-
 27 ries of emotions. One major feature of these views, since the 1950s, has been a
 28 divorce between the theories inspired by Hume and those inspired by Husserl and
 29 Meinong, which, in many ways persists today, although the gap between the "ana-
 30 lytic" conceptions and the "phenomenological" ones tends now to narrow down. At
 31 the time when Davidson wrote on these issues, there was a divide, in the English
 32 speaking world, between a British tradition led by Ryle (1949) and Kenny (1963)
 33 on the one hand, and philosophers like Chisholm (1969) and Findlay (1963) on the
 34 other, who were Meinong's heirs. There was, nevertheless, during the 60s and 70s,
 35 a small tradition of writing on emotions within mainstream analytic philosophy,
 36 with the work of Thalberg (1977), Pitcher (1965), Lyons (1980) and Wilson (1975)
 37 among others, with which Davidson was familiar. Later, during the 80 and 90s, work
 38 on emotions started within cognitive science, which was to breed the contemporary
 39 boom on emotion research during the last thirty years. Davidson did not contribute
 40 to this cognitive science literature, to which, I suspect, he was in many ways hostile.
 41 His main references within psychology were the kind of psychology based on prob-
 42 ability and decision theory that he himself pioneered in Stanford during the fifties
 43 (Davidson 1957; Tversky and Slovic 1982), and psychoanalysis, in which he had
 44 become more and more interested, in particular when he discussed these issues with
 45 Cavell (1993).

46 It would be wrong, however, to suppose that Davidson approached these topics as
 47 from the outside. On the contrary, from the very start of his philosophical career, he
 48 thought about desire, emotions, passions, and the role of rationality in mental life.
 49 His dissertation on Plato's *Philebus*, the main philosophical dialogue on pleasure and
 50 desire, bears witness of his early and deep interest in these issues. His now classical
 51 essays on action, events and adverbs, and his analysis of Hume's conception of the
 52 passions (1976) were in large part the product of a dialogue with Ryle, Kenny and
 53 Chisholm. And his later essays, from 1980 to 2003, on the paradoxes of irrationality
 54 and on the divided self are directly the product of his thinking on these issues, as well
 55 as his late essay on Spinoza (1999). The problem of the nature of emotions is much
 56 behind his writings on values, which have been recent the focus of much attention
 57 (Myers 2004, 2012, 2013). So although the secondary literature on Davidson's views
 58 on emotions is rather small (Green 2013), the issue is in many ways quite central to
 59 his views on mind, action, and values.

60 Before looking at Davidson's views, it will be important to give some background
 61 of recent views on emotions. There are three main strands:

62 First, on most views, emotions are mental states or episodes involving the
63 following features:

- 64 1. a sensory experience associated to an intentional component
- 65 2. a kind of appraisal, or some evaluative mode based on an affect
- 66 3. physiological changes, facial expressions and other behavioral effects
- 67 4. characteristic feelings and phenomenal qualia
- 68 5. cognitive and attentional processes
- 69 6. an action-tendency or some other kind of motivational component.
- 70 7. a neuronal basis.

71 As everyone knows, these features are neither exhaustive nor inclusive, and taken
72 together they do not give necessary and sufficient conditions for emotions: some
73 emotions do not issue in specific behaviors or in characteristic feelings, not all
74 conceptions of emotions entail a cognitive component (behaviorists theories reject
75 it), some emotions give rise to no action. But overall, many writers agree on this
76 pattern of features, although each conception emphasizes some features and down-
77 plays some others, and it is reasonable to expect that any serious theory of emotion
78 should account for these features or explain why some of them do not play a genuine
79 role.

80 Second, theories of emotion also diverge on the nature of emotions as mental
81 phenomena. Are these episodes, dispositions, feelings, sentiments, passions, moods?
82 Behaviorists view them as pieces of behavior producing feelings (James 1889). Some
83 theorists see them mostly as conative states (Fridja 1986; Clore and Huntsinger 2007).
84 Cognitivists see them as based on beliefs (Solomon 1988; Nussbaum 2001). To what
85 extent do they depend on their neurological basis (Ledoux 1996)? To what extent are
86 they socially and culturally constructed? What are the differences between basic and
87 non-basic emotions? Are there kinds of emotions, such as those which are purely
88 affective or those which are sometimes called “epistemic”? Can emotion combine,
89 and give rise to mixed emotions? Indeed not all theories agree on these issues.

90 Third, an important chapter of the philosophy of emotions concerns what we
91 may call the epistemology of emotions: can emotions be justified? If so, in what
92 sense? Can they be based on reasons? In what sense can they be rational? Can
93 they be in some sense true? If they contain an evaluative element in what sense
94 can they involve some normative appraisal and stand in some cognitive relation to
95 values? Since at least Kenny (1963), who took up some medieval terminology (see
96 also Chisholm 1969; Teroni 2007), it has been customary to distinguish the material
97 object of an emotion (say the particular dog I am now afraid of), from its formal object
98 (the typical kind of thing which is the object of fear, the *fearable*). An emotion is
99 correct if it is appropriate to its formal object. It is also usual to talk of the cognitive
100 basis of the emotion as the epistemic source from which the emotion flows (say my
101 perception of a salivating dog). This source of basis is distinct from the object of the
102 emotion (the dog) and from its content (that this dog is dangerous). This framework
103 seems to presuppose that emotions can have a propositional content which is truth-
104 evaluable and that they can be in some sense judgements, hence to presuppose what
105 is called a “cognitivist” conception of emotion. But the idea that emotions involve

106 valuing needs neither rest on any cognitivist construal of emotions nor on the idea
 107 that they involve relations to propositional truths about values. The valuing can be
 108 constructed as being reduced to the affect itself, and values may be understood as
 109 mere responses to emotions, sentiments and other affective attitudes. Anti-realist
 110 conceptions of value may rest on such a response dependent conception. There is
 111 here a classical Euthyphronic dilemma: are values emotional responses or are they
 112 objective entities which emotional reckonings register or signal? In large part, the
 113 literature on the epistemology of emotions deals with the opposition between realist
 114 views about values, according to which emotions are based on some form of cognition
 115 (judgmental or perceptual) of values, and anti-realist views according to which values
 116 are the product or the projection of affective attitudes and emotions. Some realists
 117 take the cognitive basis to be a form of perception (Scheler 1913; Mulligan 1998;
 118 Tappolet 2016), anti-realists see values are merely response dependent, while “buck
 119 passing” views of values take them to be based on fitting attitudes (Brentano 1889;
 120 Scanlon 1998).¹

121 So there are three major problems for all theories of emotions. The first is to
 122 understand on what kind of mental states—experiences, perceptions, beliefs, atti-
 123 tudes—the evaluations which emotions involve are based, and how they relate to
 124 their content. Let us call this the *basis* problem. The second is and whether these
 125 evaluations are relations to objective values or not, and in what sense. Let us call it
 126 the *value* problem. The third is to explain in what sense emotions can be said to be
 127 rational or irrational. This is the *rationality* problem.

128 3 Davidson’s Causal Theory of Emotions

129 Now on this sketchy map, where would Davidson stand? He has an answer to the
 130 three problems, although he does not articulate these in a systematic way. He seems
 131 to be close to the cognitivist view, according to which emotions involve beliefs and
 132 judgments or are based on judgments. He is also an objectivist and a realist about
 133 values (Davidson 1984, 1995; Myers 2004; Myers and Verheggen 2016). But, unlike
 134 perceptual realists about emotions and fitting attitudes analyses, he does not base his
 135 realism about values on a theory of emotions. So what kind of relationship is there
 136 for him between emotions are values? What kind of rationality or irrationality is he
 137 prepared to give to emotions?

138 Davidson’s essay on Hume’s theory of pride (1976) suggests an answer to the basis
 139 problem, although the article presents itself as a commentary on Hume’s doctrines.
 140 Hume, Davidson tells us, says that the object of an emotion is a proposition:

141 Hume’s account of pride is best suited to what may be called propositional pride—pride
 142 described by sentences like, ‘She was proud that she had been elected president.’ Hume more

¹I take the “attitudinal view” of Deonna and Teroni (2012) to be intermediary between a perceptual and a fittingness view.

143 often speaks of being proud of something—a son, a house, an ability, an accomplishment—
 144 but it is clear from his analysis that cases of being proud of something (or taking pride in
 145 something, or being proud to do something) reduce to, or are based on, propositional pride.
 146 If Hume’s theory is to cope with the other indirect passions, a propositional form must be
 147 found for each of them. (Davidson 1980: 277–278)

148 Davidson seems to endorse Hume’s cognitivism about emotion: emotions are
 149 based on belief and judgment. But as Green (2013: 507–508) points out, there are
 150 two versions of this view: a *robust* or *strong* one, according to which an emotion is not
 151 only based on a belief or judgment, but consists in a belief (thus to fear that the dog
 152 is dangerous is to believe that it is dangerous), and *modest* one, according to which
 153 the emotion at least involves a belief or a proposition, without being just a belief. On
 154 the modest view there is a belief on which the belief is based, but the belief does not
 155 exhaust the nature of the emotion. Some kind of attitude, presumably affective, must
 156 also occur about the proposition which is the content of the belief. But then what is
 157 the relation between the belief and the emotion, for instance between anger and the
 158 belief which accompanies it? It is, according to Hume as read by Davidson, a causal
 159 relation: the belief that I have been treated unjustly is the *cause* of my being angry.
 160 To be proud of one’s having a beautiful house is to believe that one has a beautiful
 161 house, which causes the pride.² But the causal relation between the belief and the
 162 emotion has to be channeled through an attitude, the attitude of approval or esteem,
 163 from the part of the subject of the emotion, of others who can share this emotion:

164 ... the basic structure of pride and its etiology as Hume saw them is clear: the cause consists,
 165 first, of a belief, concerning oneself, that one has a certain trait; and second of an attitude of
 166 approbation or esteem for anyone who has that trait. Davidson (1980: 284, Davidson 1980:
 167 284, Green 2013: 509)

168 Although Davidson’s article is only one in his work commenting on Hume’s
 169 views, it seems clear that he endorses such a cognitivist conception, which is perfectly
 170 consonant with his view of reasons as causes (Davidson 1963); the reason why the
 171 man is proud is that he has a belief which causes his pride, together with the attitude
 172 of approval. The causal theory of emotions, according to Davidson, does not merely
 173 say that an emotion is a belief. Rather it says that an emotion is a mental attitude
 174 which is caused in a certain way by a belief. Interestingly, in his essay on Spinoza’s
 175 theory of affects, Davidson ascribes the same causal theory of emotions to Spinoza,
 176 on the example of self-esteem:

177 “What Spinoza calls “self-esteem” provides a better characterization of pride,
 178 since pride can, after all, be born of a correct estimate of one’s worth. Self-esteem,

²“Hume’s theory, more or less as he gives it: the cause of pride is a conjunction of the idea of a house, say, and a quality (beauty). The quality causes the separate and pleasant passion, which under the right conditions causes (by association) the similar pleasant passion of pride. The passion of pride itself always causes the idea of self to appear, and this idea must be related (causally, by association) to the idea of the object (the house) on which the quality is placed. In short, “That cause, which excites the passion [pride], is related to the object [self], which nature has attributed to the passion; the sensation, which the cause separately produces, is related to the sensation of the passion: From this double relation of ideas and impressions, the passion is derived” (Davidson 1976, 1980: 286).

179 Spinoza says, is joy arising from thinking of our power of acting or of our actions
 180 ([*Ethics*] IIP55S). Neither Hume nor Spinoza allows a separate judgment that having
 181 a certain strength is estimable; rather, to be caused pleasure (approbation) by the belief
 182 that one has a certain ability or strength is to value that ability or strength (Davidson
 183 1993: 310–11).

184 Davidson's causal and cognitive theory of emotions suggests *prima facie* answers
 185 to each of the main problems to a theory of emotion. First, because emotions involve
 186 beliefs and propositional attitudes, they are intentional mental states. But what kind
 187 of states are they? Because they have an intentional content, they cannot be merely
 188 behavioral dispositions. But since emotions are based on beliefs, and since beliefs
 189 are, at least in part, dispositions, emotions are, at least in part dispositions. To be
 190 proud of having a beautiful house is to be disposed to answer queries about one's
 191 house, and to act accordingly. An emotion, though, is not merely dispositional: there
 192 are indeed emotional dispositions, such as irascibility or cowardice, but emotions are
 193 most of the time occurrent episodes. In this sense they are not a mood or feelings,
 194 although they can be associated to feelings. It is, as we can see from the quote just
 195 given about Spinoza's causal theory, a certain kind of affective state, involving a
 196 valuing, which is caused by a belief.

197 Second, Davidson's causal theory of emotions suggests an answer to the value
 198 problem. The valuing is itself a certain kind of attitude. The emotion consists in this
 199 causal structure. That still does not tell us whether the valuing involves a relation to
 200 a separate entity, a value, or whether the value just consists in the valuing.

201 Third, the causal theory gives us the basic element for Davidson's answer to
 202 the rationality problem: since emotions are caused by beliefs, they can, through
 203 the beliefs, be reasons and have reasons. In this sense too they are, as intentional
 204 states, susceptible of being rational. An emotion is rational if the subject which has
 205 it, can see it as rational, and if it can also be interpreted as such by others. Here
 206 the constraints are just those which weight on actions and beliefs in Davidson's
 207 conception of interpretation. A subject has authority over which emotions he has
 208 (one is a better judge of one's anger than others) but he is not for that infallible (one
 209 can hate someone without realizing it) (Green 2013: 514). The fact that emotions are
 210 rational at least in the sense that they are interpretable and liable to the standards of
 211 rationality which are necessary for interpretation does not mean that emotions are
 212 rational. Indeed they can be irrational, as cases of *akrasia*, self-deception and other
 213 episodes amply show. Davidson has often dealt with this issue, which is actually
 214 central for his causal conception of reasons: if an agent believes himself to have the
 215 best reasons to do something, why does he not do it? If an agent has good evidence
 216 for a belief that *p*, how can he come up with the belief that not *p*? In these cases of
 217 irrational behavior and belief, as Davidson notes, rationality and causality fall apart:
 218 a reason ought to be a rational cause, but with *akrasia* and self-deception the best
 219 reasons fail to be the right causes (Davidson 1982). Emotions also play an important
 220 role here, but not as rationalizers of action. They play a role in understanding why
 221 some actions, such as those made out of weakness of the will, or some beliefs, such
 222 as those acquired through wishful thinking or self-deception, can fail to be rational.

223 However, these answers to the three problems are only *prima facie*, because we
 224 still have to understand, within the causal structure in which an emotion consists, in
 225 what sense an emotion can involve a belief, without being itself a belief, how this
 226 causal structure can give rise to a valuing, and how it can respond to reasons.

227 4 Davidson on Emotions and Objective Values

228 Although Davidson's remarks on emotions are often unsystematic, there is at least
 229 one issue of which he gives an explicit treatment: valuing and the problem of the
 230 reality of values. This, I shall try to show, gives us an answer to the main issues that
 231 are raised by a theory of emotion from Davidson's perspective.

232 Let us start with the value problem. It can be formulated in the following way: what
 233 is it for an emotion to be *correct*? In what sense can we talk of the truth of an emotion?
 234 The answer seems to be that it must in some sense be true to the facts that the emotion
 235 is a reaction to. It must also in some sense be justified, in the sense that there must
 236 be a reason, or some reasons for the emotion, which are themselves good reasons,
 237 and such that the emotion is appropriate. But how can we ensure the conditions
 238 of correctness of appropriateness of emotions? Some emotions are inappropriate
 239 or incorrect because their objects do not exist. Thus I may be afraid of a perfectly
 240 inoffensive spider or be angry at you for no reason. Davidson was familiar with this
 241 problem since his dissertation on the Philebus (1949) where Plato argues that some
 242 pleasures might be false. If we formulate this problem in terms of his causal theory,
 243 the question for Davidson is twofold: first if an emotion is caused by a belief, in what
 244 sense is it *based*, in the sense of *justified* by the belief? Second, can it be justified if the
 245 belief is false? The answer to the latter question is easy: if the belief from which the
 246 emotion originates—say the belief that this dog is attacking me causing my fear of the
 247 dog—is false—the dog rushes to me affectionately—is my emotion inappropriate?
 248 Maybe it's not: rushing dogs can be dangerous. Some emotions, however, are *factive*:
 249 thus to be disgusted or to be horrified is to be disgusted or horrified at something
 250 which is there (Gordon 1987). The answer to the first question is more complex.
 251 One's pride to have a beautiful house is caused by the belief that one has a beautiful
 252 house. But even if the belief is true, does that make the emotion of pride *correct* and
 253 *justified*? To answer that question it is not enough to consider the belief upon which
 254 the emotion originates, but also whether the emotion is associated to a valuing which
 255 is objectively correct. But how does the emotion, which is a subjective feeling, relate
 256 to the value? How can the emotion, so to say, track the value?

257 There are two kinds of answer to this question to which Davidson is not attracted.
 258 The first is the Humean one. One could expect that Davidson would follow Hume,
 259 on the basis of his cognitive theory of emotions: the emotion is not related to a value,
 260 because there are no such things as values, although there are *valuings*, attitudes of
 261 ascribing values to things or states of affairs. Humeans take these attitudes to be based
 262 essentially to desires and motivations. If there are values, these are mere projections
 263 out of our attitudes of appraisal. This entails that judgments about value are neither

264 true nor false, and that our emotions cannot be objectively correct. But Davidson does
 265 not follow this Humean path. On the contrary he takes values to be objective, and
 266 thinks of himself as a realist about values. Our feelings and emotions are objectively
 267 correct because our judgments are (Davidson 1984, 1995). Anti-realist theories of
 268 value cannot account for this correctness.

269 The other kind of answer is the perceptual realist one: emotions track values
 270 because they are perceptions of values, understood as some kind of real entity external
 271 to the sensible world, in which the emotion puts us into some relation. According
 272 to the terminology of formal objects of emotion presented above, the objects of
 273 emotions are evaluative properties or values. From this is natural to think that an
 274 emotion puts us in some sort of contact, perceptual or experiential, with a value, as
 275 the formal object of the emotion, taken as a real object out of the world, and that
 276 the emotion is correct if the perception on which it is based fits the formal object.³
 277 The perceptual theory does not take the content of the emotion to be a propositional
 278 object. It takes it as the object of an experience, which may not involve any concept
 279 of judgment. And it takes values to be a certain kind of real entity, autonomous from
 280 agents, to which their perceptual experience makes them sensitive.

281 Davidson rejects both the Humean and the perceptual views. He rejects an anti-
 282 realist theory of values and takes these to be real and objective, but not in an onto-
 283 logical sense. The objectivity of values is not a matter of placing, within the natural
 284 world or in some Platonic realm, a certain kind of entity. It is a matter of being related,
 285 in a certain way, to an objective world of events:

286 Objectivity depends not on the location of an attributed property, or its supposed conceptual
 287 tie to human sensibilities; it depends on there being a systematic relationship between the
 288 attitude-causing properties of things and events, and the attitudes they cause. What makes
 289 our judgments of the “descriptive” properties of things true or false is the fact that the same
 290 properties tend to cause the same beliefs in different observers, and when observers differ,
 291 we assume there is an explanation. This is not just a platitude, it’s a tautology, one whose
 292 truth is ensured by how we interpret people’s beliefs. My thesis is that the same holds for
 293 moral values. (Davidson 1994, 2004: 46)

294 His argument is not ontological, but epistemological: once we understand clearly
 295 how we can ascribe evaluative attitudes to people on the basis of their evaluative judg-
 296 ments, we shall be able to conclude that these attitudes are bound to track objective
 297 values.

298 Davidson invites us, as he does in many other contexts, to start from the necessary
 299 features of interpretation. The familiar claims are the following⁴:

- 300 1. Evidential basis: the task of interpretation is to ascribe to agents propositional
 301 attitudes, such as beliefs, desires, intentions and preferences, which have certain
 302 contents. Interpretation has to start from publicly observable features of agents
 303 and of their environment and must rest on an evidential basis.

³This is indeed a very rough and inaccurate presentation of the perceptual view. There are actually a number of views of this sort. See Mulligan (1998; Tappolet 2016) for the stronger versions.

⁴Here I follow the very clear presentations by R. H. Myers in Myers and Verheggen (2016) (see also Lillehammer 2007). For a more detailed examination of the argument see Engel (2017).

- 304 2. Holism: the contents of someone's attitudes necessarily depend on the contents
305 of many other attitudes.
- 306 3. Charity: given that the contents of attitudes are necessarily interconnected, one
307 must presuppose that there is at least a minimal coherence between these contents,
308 and ascription of coherent sets of content cannot be made unless the interpreter
309 presupposes that the agent shares a large amount of true beliefs with him.
- 310 4. If agents are to be interpretable, they not only must share attitudes and contents
311 which are largely similar to ours, but also largely correct.

312 Let us call this the *argument from interpretation*. Any reader of Davidson will
313 recognize the affinity between this argument and the one which he uses to refute
314 radical skepticism: since interpretation presupposes a massive degree of agreement
315 on beliefs which are largely correct, these beliefs have to be about an objective
316 world (Davidson 1981). Davidson applies this reasoning to desires, then to values,
317 expanding (iv) into.

- 318 1. If agents are to be interpretable, they share values which are largely similar to
319 ours, correct, and objective.

320 If the argument from interpretation to objective values is supposed to work, I must
321 not simply bear on particular desires and other attitudes, because the holistic pattern
322 that these might display does not guarantee that agents converge on the same desires
323 and values. The problem here is very close to the problem known in utility theory as
324 the problem of interpersonal comparisons of utilities (Davidson 1986). The desires
325 in question must not be transitory, such as the particular desire of an ice cream at a
326 particular time. They must be long standing and, as Davidson says "enlightened":
327 they must actually be beliefs about what is good *in general*, hence *normative desires*,
328 about what is *desirable*:

329 To what extent do these considerations apply to the evaluative attitudes? It is possible, I
330 think, to show that the justified attribution of values to someone else provides a basis for
331 judgments of comparisons of value, what is called the interpersonal comparison of values.
332 But the comparability of values does not in itself imply agreed-on standards, much less that
333 we can legitimately treat value judgments as true or false. Now I want to go on to suggest that
334 we should expect enlightened values—the reasons we would have for valuing and acting if
335 we had all the (non-evaluative) facts straight—to converge; we should expect people who are
336 enlightened *and fully understand one another* to agree on their basic values. An appreciation
337 of what makes for such convergence or agreement also shows that value judgments are true
338 or false in much the way our factual judgments are. (1994, 2004:49)

339 The values on which we must expect a convergence must not be simply basic
340 values, such as the value of basic human needs such as food, sex and safety but also
341 enlightened values, such as justice, equality or freedom. But how can we be sure that
342 there is a convergence on such values? Davidson requires that such convergence can
343 be reached *only* when people, within a community, understand each other. But do
344 the minimal conditions or interpretation, together with the principles of charity and
345 of rationality which accompany them suffice to make agents "believer[s] of truth,
346 and lover[s] of the good" (Davidson 1969; 1980: 222). There must also be "shared
347 criteria":

348 [I]f I am right, disputes over values (as in the case of other disputes) can be genuine only
 349 when there are shared criteria in the light of which there is an answer to the question who
 350 is right... When we find a difference inexplicable, that is, not due to ignorance or confusion,
 351 the difference is not genuine... The importance of a background of shared beliefs and values
 352 is that such a background allows us to make sense of the idea of a common standard of right
 353 and wrong, true and false. (Davidson 1995, 2004, 50–51).

354 But how do we know these criteria, and how they are shared? As Lillehammer
 355 (2007: 214–5) has remarked, the holistic strategy does not guarantee that “there is a
 356 uniquely fixed and determinate set of particular features of the world the positive or
 357 negative evaluation of which all agents must share if they understand each other and
 358 are otherwise well informed about the (non-evaluative) facts”. When considering this
 359 difficulty, Davidson comes back to the requirement of charity and good interpretation:
 360 when we find uninterpretable difference, this is a sign of bad interpretation (ibid).
 361 So when we ask *how* interpretation can actually converge on shared values, we are
 362 told that it *must* converge.⁵

363 Although Davidson’s argument from interpretation is an argument about the existence
 364 of objective *practical* values, he nowhere proposes a similar argument for the
 365 objectivity of *epistemic* values. Nevertheless, he sometimes gives hints at what he
 366 would say on this issue. There is indeed a wide debate about the nature of epistemic
 367 values and norms, but it need not concern us here. Let us only take it for granted that
 368 truth, rationality, justification and knowledge are plausible candidates.⁶ Our question
 369 is: could Davidson give a parallel argument about epistemic values and norms
 370 (whatever they are)? Such an argument would try to justify the objective status of
 371 values such as truth, knowledge, rationality and justification, through our judgments
 372 about these values, and it should show that we can converge on these values and
 373 norms. But such argument makes no sense for Davidson: the truth of our beliefs,
 374 their rationality and their justifications are not values or norms, which we could posit
 375 independently and which could be objects judgments. They are *presuppositions* or
 376 *principles of interpretation*. Rationality and charity (the sharing of true and coherent
 377 beliefs) are objective, in the sense that without these normative principles, we could
 378 not understand others or ascribe to them beliefs. So there is no need of an independent
 379 argument to this effect. But here again it is not clear that Davidson’s view yields a
 380 sufficiently robust, or sufficiently realist, conception of these values and norms. The
 381 fact that rationality and charity are what makes interpretation possible does not tell
 382 us *how* we can converge on these as values, or why knowledge can be a stronger
 383 value than true belief. And if the convergence is not guaranteed, we cannot say that

⁵Myers (2012, 2013) (see also Myers and Veregghen 2016) gives a defense of the holistic strategy, but concedes that Davidson’s realism about values cannot be stronger than the form of value objectivism of the kind for which contractualists like Scanlon (2014) can reach.

⁶When he examines the suggestion that truth might be an epistemic norm, Davidson answers clearly that truth is neither a norm nor a goal (Davidson 1998). He is right: truth is not a value or a norm (Engel 2000). Epistemic norms and values are never self-standing, they are norms and values with respect to belief and knowledge: believing the truth and knowing the truth are at least *prima facie* values and norms, just as justification. This is disputable, but this question need not concern us here.

384 emotions, and the attitudes on which they are based, are correct or not, and whether
 385 they track the right values.⁷

386 5 Fitting Attitudes and Idealization

387 A striking feature of the argument from interpretation to the objectivity of values
 388 is that, unlike the Humean or the perceptual model, it does not talk of emotions
 389 and of their relation to values. It talks about desires and their relation to judgments
 390 *about* values. This is a consequence of the revised cognitive model that Davidson
 391 subscribes to: values are not entities with which we could be in direct contact through
 392 certain kinds of experiences, feelings or emotions. For Davidson our relation to
 393 values is necessarily indirect, and goes through our interpretation of others and our
 394 sharing various attitudes and reactions with them. In this respect Davidson keeps an
 395 important feature of the cognitive theory which he ascribed to Hume: an emotion is
 396 caused by a belief and by the attitude of approval of those who share the emotion.
 397 This intersubjective character is essential, and makes for the objectivity of the shared
 398 values. But as we saw, it fails to give us an account of the correctness of emotions.

399 Davidson could have proposed an alternative analysis of the relation between
 400 emotions and values which could account for the correctness of emotions. This
 401 analysis what is now called the *fitting attitude* analysis of value, according to which
 402 values consist in a certain relation between attitudes which are fitting in response
 403 to these values. On such a view, values are neither the expressions of our attitudes
 404 nor independent realities which could be perceived. Evaluative concepts have to
 405 be explained in terms of fitting or appropriate emotions. On such views, values
 406 are response dependent, as they are for Humeans, but they are neither subjective
 407 nor projections out of our attitudes. They are based on our judgements about the
 408 correctness, or the *reasons* that one has to have these attitudes.⁸

409 Davidson does not explicitly discuss such neo-Brentanian views, but he was
 410 certainly familiar with these from his reading of Kenny's *Action, emotion and will*
 411 (1963) and from the work of Chisholm, whose views on action he discussed intensively.⁹
 412 The fitting attitude analysis starts from emotions. It does not say that they
 413 can be true or false, but that they are fitting or not, and this fittingness is itself an
 414 objective matter. In the terminology presented above, emotions have a formal object,
 415 which is a value property. Thus the formal object of fear is the *fearable*, the formal
 416 object of love is the *lovable*, the formal object of admiration is the *admirable*. But

⁷For an argument to the effect that Davidson must adopt a stronger notion of normativity in the epistemic domain, see Engel (2008).

⁸There are actually a number of versions. For presentations see (Chisholm 1969; Mulligan 1998; Danielson and Olson 2007; Tappolet 2016, Chap. 3). It is sometimes associated to the «buck passing» account of values: the buck is passed to reasons. Scanlon (1998, 2014), Skorupski (2010) are the main contemporary defenders of such views.

⁹See Brentano (1889), Chisholm (1969), and Davidson 's essays in reply to Chisholm in Davidson (1980).

417 how can the view be made something other than a tautology? One can fear objects
 418 which are not fearable (little innocuous spiders) or which do not exist (monsters).
 419 How can the view yield fittingness to objective values?

420 Davidson does not talk of the fitness of attitudes and emotions, but he often
 421 characterizes the causal link between action, belief and reason in terms of the notion
 422 of *appropriateness*. An action is caused “in an appropriate way” for a given reason
 423 if the action fits the reason (the cases where it does not fit are cases of “deviant
 424 causal” chains”. Interestingly most of Davidson’s examples of deviant causal chains
 425 are cases where an emotion intervenes in the causal sequence leading from intentions
 426 and reasons for an action to the action. Thus the climber who is so nervous that he
 427 releases the rope holding his partner out of the desire to free himself from his weight
 428 and his belief that he could do this by releasing the rope is under the causal influence
 429 of an emotion. Famously Davidson tells us that he despairs of spelling out “the way
 430 the attitudes cause he action of they are to rationalize the action” (Davidson 1980:
 431 79). He might say the same thing about the fitness of emotion to value. But that
 432 does not bring his view closer to the fittingness account. Davidson actually does not
 433 accept the idea that values are the formal objects of the emotions, for two reasons.
 434 The first can be recovered from his dispute with Chisholm and Kenny. When he
 435 deals with the formal object of actions, Kenny (1963) tells us that one encounters the
 436 problem of “variable polyadicity” of action verbs: how can they have a single formal
 437 object, given that actions are relative to all sorts of circumstances, such as when,
 438 how, where, by whom the action was done? Davidson’s answer to this problem in
 439 “The logical form of action sentences” (1967) is well known: he proposes to add
 440 to action predicates argument places for events, and to construe action sentences as
 441 quantifying over them. Thus he breaks down the very notion of a formal object into
 442 a core property (expressed by the action verb), events and the properties of these
 443 events. In accepting that the events which make up an action are real entities in the
 444 world, Davidson rejected the view that actions could have a formal object. One can
 445 presume that Davidson would have rejected in the same way the notion of a formal
 446 object of emotions, although his analysis still involves a commitment to properties.
 447 But his later writings, as I have tried to show, do not entail any commitment to *value*
 448 *properties*.

449 The second reason has to do with his rejection of the foundationalist model of justi-
 450 fication. This model is much present in the perceptual account of emotions as experi-
 451 ences of value. Crude versions of this account say that emotions are direct perceptions
 452 of evaluative properties. But these crude versions encounter many difficulties, such
 453 as these: the phenomenology of emotions is not the same as the phenomenology of
 454 perceptions, there can be mixed and conflicting emotions, and emotions seem to be
 455 liable to rational assessment in a way in which perceptions are not (Tappolet 2016,
 456 Chap. 1). But even if one does not adopt a perceptual model, and if one accepts a
 457 version of the fitting attitude analysis, one has to accept at least the principle that
 458 when one has an emotional response to a perceived object or event, then it thereby
 459 seems to you that that object or event possesses some evaluative property. The justifi-
 460 cation of the emotion, its being correct, supervenes on the content of the mental states

461 on which it is based, that is its cognitive basis.¹⁰ This is a form of *prima facie* and
 462 immediate justification: it seems to you, from your perceiving of this salivating dog,
 463 that it is dangerous, and thereby you experience fear of the dog.¹¹ The perception
 464 justifies the evaluative judgment in which consists the emotion. It is important here to
 465 distinguish this relation of justification between the cognitive basis and the evaluative
 466 judgment from the causal relation which the cognitive theory postulates between the
 467 perception and the judgment. When Davidson adheres, as we saw above, to a modest
 468 version of the cognitive theory, he does not take the relation to be one of *justifica-*
 469 *tion*. However the idea that emotional justification comes from the awareness of a
 470 cognitive basis has been strongly criticized: not only one can be *prima facie* justified
 471 and wrong, but also there can be large differences in the ways cognitive bases and
 472 emotions represent objects and properties, so cognitive bases are not sufficient to
 473 justify emotional responses.¹² The relationship between emotional experience and
 474 evaluative beliefs need be neither direct nor foundational in the sense suggested by
 475 the simple perceptual model or in the sense of the model of *prima facie* justification.
 476 It can be holistic, and such that the emotional experience and its relation to values
 477 is further confirmed by related beliefs.¹³ The fit between the perceived situation, the
 478 emotion and the issued value judgments may be more a matter of coherence than
 479 a matter of perceptual basis, and the correctness of emotions need not be based on
 480 some mysterious capacity of grasping the values within the emotional experiences.
 481 As de Sousa (2005) argues, the appearance of tautology of the fitting attitude anal-
 482 ysis (the formal object of love is the *lovable*, of fear the *fearable*) can t be dispelled
 483 “because the attainment of success for emotions—the actual fit between the object
 484 or target of the emotion and its formal object—depends on a vast holistic network
 485 of factors that transcend my actual responses”.

486 Clearly Davidson has more sympathy with the idea that the justification of
 487 emotions, and their correctness, are more a matter of holistic relations between experi-
 488 ences, beliefs and facts than a matter of immediate justification. As we saw, Davidson,
 489 as any Quinean, does not like the notion of intentional object of attitudes or emotions.
 490 He dislikes any idea that there could objects “present to the mind” (Davidson 1989).
 491 When he spells out his account of the relation between emotions and desire states to
 492 values, his line consists in explaining them through causal relations between facts,
 493 speakers, and their attitudes. But, as we saw, the main difficulty which his account
 494 has to face is: what kinds of facts can secure the fit between emotional attitude and
 495 value? Facts about human nature? Biological facts? Social facts? And how can we
 496 go from these facts to commitments to values?

¹⁰See Deonna and Teroni (2012), Goldie (2000), Mulligan (1998). Basically this view is close to Brentano’s view that emotions “manifest themselves to be correct” (Chisholm 1969).

¹¹This is indeed just the reverse of the James-Lange theory.

¹²For this kind of criticism of the *prima facie* view, sometimes called “emotional dogmatism”, see Borggaard and Chudnoff (2016), Echeverri (2019).

¹³See in particular Brady (2014), Roesser and Todd (2014).

497 So, Davidson could not be a fitting attitude theorist of the relation between
 498 emotions and values. However, there is a version of this theory which might be
 499 understood as a development of a Davidsonian idea.

500 Our attitudes, such as belief, desire, hope, or regret, but also our emotions, such
 501 as love, hate and disgust are all associated to various presuppositions about the
 502 kinds of judgements, inferential relations, causal profiles, and strategies that they
 503 involve. In particular emotions are all the more complex that they are tied to complex
 504 presuppositions (think for instance of mixed emotions). These presuppositions are
 505 in many ways contingent and can vary, depending on social, historical, or cultural
 506 factors. They are in various ways tied to our nature, and can depend of all kinds
 507 of circumstances in individuals: for instance some people are afraid of tiny spiders,
 508 many believe or desire weird things. The holistic structure of the justification of
 509 emotions is in large part the product of this diversity and of the diversity of these
 510 factors. These contingencies and links, however, do not affect the essence or nature
 511 of the attitudes. Each attitude has an ideal profile, one which it ought to have. It is
 512 particularly the case for belief: it is an attitude which is associated, implicitly or not,
 513 in a believer, to what he takes himself to believe, to what he considers that he ought
 514 to believe, which is constrained by the rational norms of interpretation. Davidson
 515 said in "Mental events" (1980: 223) that the domain of the mental is governed by "a
 516 constitutive ideal of rationality". An interpreter has to start from this ideal profile, and
 517 the subjects of emotions and other attitudes could not be interpreted if they did not
 518 aim at this ideal profile, even when they are far from instantiating it in their actions
 519 and beliefs. The correctness of an emotion is the fit between the causal profile and
 520 the ideal attitudinal profile. The value involves is what ideally the emotion would
 521 be an approval of. The same idea can be found in some partisans of the fitting
 522 attitude view of emotions and values. Thus J. Findlay, an anglophone philosopher
 523 who worked in the Brentanian tradition, talks in reference to Bishop Butler's notion
 524 of moral sense, of *Butlerian attitudes*, those which are idealised to an impartial point
 525 of view: one abstracts away from personal biases and pretends to take policies which
 526 are reasonable and turns one's back from a certain range of facts (Findlay 1954).
 527 We can understand Davidson conception of emotion and values in the same way:
 528 emotions are correct, and track objective values, when we put them within the right
 529 set of relations. The attitudes that are correct are not those that are made so by a
 530 certain range of natural facts, but those that one ideally would reach if one turned
 531 one's back on those facts, and tried to adopt an idealized point of view. This form of
 532 idealization is nothing different from the objective standpoint on values and norms,
 533 which Davidson meant to be reachable from his interpretation argument.

534 6 Conclusion

535 There are many more aspects of Davidson's views on emotion that I have not
 536 discussed in this article: in particular his account of how emotions play a role in the
 537 processes which lead to irrational behavior and belief. His conception of emotions

538 and of their justification is, within the contemporary literature of emotions, very
 539 original. He stands in between the two main strands of analysis which still dominate
 540 the field today: the Humean and the Brentanian one. To the first he owes a causal
 541 theory of emotions. With respect to the second, he comes close to a fitting attitude
 542 view. But his holism and his externalism about the mind put him on a distinctive
 543 path.

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Author Queries

Chapter 5

Query Refs.	Details Required	Author's response
AQ1	References 'Ryle (1949), Danielson and Olson (2007), Scanlon (1998, 2014), Skorupski (2010), Brentano (1889), Borgaard and Chudnoff (2016), Brady (2014), Green (2013)' are cited in text but not provided in the reference list. Please provide references in the list or delete these citations.	
AQ2	References 'Brentano (1969), Brogaard and Chudnoff (2016), Davidson (2001), Danielsson and Olson (2007), Deonna and Teroni (2014), Sousa (1986), Engel (2018), Myers (1998, 2014), Solomon (1984), are given in list but not cited in text. Please cite in text or delete them from list.	
AQ3	Kindly note that the references citations 'Roesser and Todd (2013), Clore (2007), Fridja (1987)' has been changed to 'Roesser and Todd (2014), Clore and Huntsinger (2007), Fridja (1986)' so that these citations matches the list.	

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