

THE EPISTEMIC ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN VALUE SENSITIVITY:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS¹

O Papel Epistêmico das Emoções na Sensibilidade ao Valor: uma análise fenomenológica

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a phenomenological account of central epistemic roles that emotions can play in the context of value sensitivity. I specify significant ways emotions are given in lived experience as possible sources of value apprehension. Thereby, an *explanandum* or experienced framework for the ongoing debate on the relation between emotion and value awareness is explicated. Through a phenomenological analysis, the paper explicates and illustrates three central epistemic functions that emotions can have in being sources of evaluative information, as seen from the point of view of lived experience: A) Emotions are constitutively related to presentations of value; B) Emotions tend to prompt specific value attention; and C) Emotional openness can play a crucial role in directly grasping determinate value. Further, based on the analyses of A), B), and C), the phenomenological investigation makes intelligible what can go wrong when emotions distort our evaluative outlook and argues that it can be analyzed as a result of the central attention-shaping functions of emotions as they present themselves in lived experience.

Key-words: Phenomenology of emotion; value theory; emotional experience; value sensitivity.

RESUMO

Este documento apresenta um relato fenomenológico dos papéis epistêmicos centrais que as emoções podem desempenhar no contexto da sensibilidade ao valor. Especifico as formas significativas como as emoções são dadas na experiência vivida como possíveis fontes de apreensão de valor. Assim, uma explicação ou estrutura experiente para o debate em andamento sobre a relação entre a emoção e a consciência de valor é explicada. Através de uma análise fenomenológica, o documento explica e ilustra três funções epistê-

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micas centrais que as emoções podem ter ao serem fontes de informação avaliativa, como visto do ponto de vista da experiência vivida: A) As emoções estão constitutivamente relacionadas a apresentações de valor; B) As emoções tendem a suscitar atenção específica de valor; e C) A abertura emocional pode desempenhar um papel crucial na compreensão direta de valor determinado. Além disso, com base nas análises de A), B) e C), a investigação fenomenológica torna inteligível o que pode dar errado quando as emoções distorcem nossa visão avaliativa e argumenta que ela pode ser analisada como resultado das funções centrais de formação da atenção das emoções à medida que elas se apresentam na experiência vivida.

Palavras-chave: Fenomenologia da emoção; teoria do valor; experiência emocional; sensibilidade do valor.

Introductory Remarks – method, contribution, and terminological clarifications

In the following, I examine different ways in which emotions can contribute to facilitating value sensitivity. Cognitive and perceptual accounts of emotions in philosophy have long argued that there are intimate connections between evaluation, attention, and emotions (de Sousa, 1987; Ferran, 2008; Goldie, 2002; Roeser, 2011; Tappolet, 2007), but the essential nature of this connection is still a matter of dispute (Audi, 2013; Bergqvist & Cowan, 2018; Brady, 2016)). Instead of engaging directly in this debate, this paper presses pause and reconsiders the subject matter of discussion: Through the method of philosophical phenomenology, the contribution is to establish a significant *explanandum* for any possible adequate account of the connection between emotion and value sensitivity (Huemer, 2007; Husserl, 1950; Overgaard, Gilbert, & Burwood, 2013). The paper's phenomenological approach to evaluative emotions resembles the accounts of Maiese (2014) and Furtak (2018) in emphasizing how we do not experience the evaluative and the affective components of emotional experience as distinct and separate elements. On the contrary, we experience them as aspects of the same, which is why emotions are not merely responses to evaluations; they have crucial epistemic evaluative functions. Further, they are fundamental to our evaluative experience. Maiese (2014) emphasizes (with Heidegger, 2006) how we engage with the world through what she calls an 'affective

framing,' i.e., affective and cognitive elements are essentially *intertwined* in the emotional life that grounds our pre-reflective engagement with our surroundings. The following phenomenological analysis can be read as an attempt to further explicate some of the details of how the affective framing occurs in terms of central epistemic functions.

The phenomenological account serves as a reminder about central explain-worthy aspects of the richness of our experience. It is crucial not to reduce phenomenological analysis to a static description of subjective experience or linguistic structures. We should maintain its original meaning (Heidegger, 2006; Husserl, 1966, 1973; Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Zahavi, 2019): Philosophical phenomenology reconstructs the phenomena given in lived experience in the broadest sense. That includes analyzing the objects of lived experience, the fundamental structures of the various ways these objects are experienced, the explication of (more or less tacit) pre-reflective levels of the formation of experienced meaning, and the reconstruction of typical or necessary relations between types of phenomena such as certain intentional states (e.g., emotions) and their objects (e.g., values) (Husserl, 1966, §4). Before explaining the connection between emotions and value sensitivity, we must restrain our conclusions considering what is, in fact, the matter of investigation presented to us in lived experience.

Some terminological stipulations are appropriate at this point. I take 'emotions' here to minimally refer to complex, affective, intentional states with more or less distinct objects. This conception distinguishes emotions from feelings and moods that do not necessarily have distinct intentional objects, although emotions can be occurrent and thus felt. Further, they can be argued to have necessary relations to feelings and basic moods (Ferran, 2008; Ratcliffe, 2012; Searle, 1992). I make use of a phenomenological concept of 'value,' which takes the term to minimally denote the property of an object either experienced as positive or negative (or as a complex of positive and negative parts) (Ferran, 2008; Husserl, 1988; Scheler, 2007), or a property that disposes to such an experience. This minimal concept of value remains relatively neutral about the ontology of value; it fits well with promising response-dependent accounts of value (McDowell, 1998; Wiggins, 1987) and is consistent with more 'robust' realist accounts of value

(Schafer-Landau, 2003) as well as non-cognitive, anti-realist, and constructivist accounts in ‘quasi-realist’ versions (Blackburn, 2001). I understand ‘value sensitivity’ broadly as a receptiveness to apprehending value in the above sense. The connotation of a receptiveness to value akin to ordinary sensation indicated in this term should not be taken too literally. The analysis does not presuppose that value sensitivity is an irreducible human faculty. However, there is a relevant structural parallel between some kinds of value sensitivity and ordinary sense perception hardly captured by terms such as ‘value cognition,’ ‘evaluation,’ and ‘value judgment.’ ‘Value sensitivity’ can capture more direct and pre-reflective kinds of value receptivity and remains, therefore, relevant, a point I elaborate on in section 4.

The paper confines itself to analyzing the functional roles played by emotions in having a qualified sensitivity to values in a broad sense. Empirical studies have shown emotions to be problematic when we make judgments about moral matters, but studies also suggest that mature moral subjects are sometimes in no need of theoretical considerations to know what they ought to do. Due to factors such as background knowledge, situational awareness, and practical know-how, they simply seem to feel what is good and the right thing to do, e.g., when experienced nurses, firefighters, educators, or parents have an immediate sense of what they ought to do without any need of reflecting upon the matter or forming propositional judgments about it (Fine, 2006; Goldie, 2007; Green, 2001; Haidt, 2001; Kahneman, 2009; Klein, Orasanu, Calderwood, & Zsombok, 1993). Some emotions can be argued to serve crucial functions in being ethically responsive in this pre-reflective way (Ferran, 2008; Steinbock, 2014). Candidates are positive emotions such as compassion and love or a negative emotion such as indignation. Emotions can also be argued to play an essential role in grasping value and in the formation of value concepts as such (Husserl, 1950, §37; 1988; Engelsen, 2018), and they can arguably serve a crucial function in shaping the attention of moral agents (Tappolet, 2007; Engelsen, 2018, 2022).

The structure of the paper is as follows: The phenomenological reconstruction specifies three typical and closely related but distinguishable phenomena – which I call A, B, and C – given in the lived experience of

emotions and value. I examine how these phenomena, if taken as given, outline central epistemic roles of emotions in the context of value sensitivity:

A) Emotions are constitutively related to presentations of value

B) Emotions tend to prompt specific value attention

C) Emotional openness can play a crucial role in directly grasping determinate value.

I present and describe each phenomenon in sections 2, 3, and 4. These explicatory analyses form the basis for examining how emotions often seem to distort evaluative awareness despite their apparent vital functions to value sensitivity in broader evaluative contexts (section 5). As we shall see, the phenomenological analysis makes intelligible how this apparent two-faced nature of the role of emotions in value sensitivity can result from the central attention-shaping functions of emotions as they present themselves in lived experience. I end the paper with some brief concluding remarks that summarize essential points.

2. Phenomenon A: Emotions are constitutively related to presentations of value

The phenomenology of emotions gives evidence of their intentionality: We experience emotions as facilitating value awareness given that they are object-directed, and part of their full intentional object is a value property or a complex of value properties. This emotion-value connection is the phenomenological background for the fundamental notion that emotions have intentional objects, and at least part of the full intentional object of an emotion is a value quality (Husserl, 1950, §37) (also sometimes referred to as the ‘formal’ intentional object of the emotion (Kenny, 1963)). When I feel indignation, I feel the emotional response of my indignation to be a response to something worthy of it, something unjust or another kind of wrongdoing. When I feel joy, I present something to be joyful. When I am worried, I present the likelihood of something negative occurring. Typically, the evaluative and the affectual aspects of the emotion are experienced as intimately related parts of the same flow of experience, and as a result, emotions can at times serve to make us mindful of value in a way our intellectual capacities

cannot. For instance, my self-narrative as an authentic individual who does not mind what others think of me can be stirred, and perhaps corrected, by my emotion of embarrassment when someone confronts me with an unpleasant opinion about my beliefs or actions. My embarrassment falsifies what I explicitly thought to be part of my character as a person: It becomes a witness to the fact that I do mind what others think of me, even if I tell myself otherwise. In other words, I present the opinion as significant and value-laden. The higher-order intellectual understanding of the same thing can be a reconstruction of this awareness rather than constitutive of it. For example, my worry about a friend's mental condition can be that which *de facto* makes me sensitive to the importance of being there for her. The full emotional experience facilitates, in this case, the tacit awareness of negative other-regarding value. The intellectual understanding is a reconstruction of this awareness rather than its ground. I can feel worried, ask myself why I am worried, and only then be able to reconstruct my awareness in an intellectual mode of presentation that makes explicit my more or less tacit expectation that something negative is occurring to my friend, to which my emotional response is necessarily related. That objects are apprehended through various modes of presentation is a central phenomenological point: By 'mode of presentation', I here refer to the fact that an intentional object is phenomenologically determined by *how* it is presented in experience. As seen from the perspective of lived experience, the content of an intentional state is realized in various forms of object-directed consciousness. The phenomenal content of the intentional state outlines the aspect under which the intentional object is presented in lived experience, and the same object can thus be presented in various ways. (This corresponds with what Searle refers to as the 'aspectual shape' of the intentional state (Searle, 1992, 155)). More tacit modes of presentation, such as certain intentional feelings given in the margin of experience, can ground the formation of higher-order representations in experience, such as thematic reflections. This is the case where an emotion such as my more or less tacitly experienced embarrassment corrects my higher-order evaluative belief upon reflection.

The tacit nature of many of the value presentations to which our emotional responses are closely related makes emotions vital sources of

value apprehension in their own right. This point does not invalidate the importance of intellectual evaluation: To be receptive to value certainly includes the ability to explicitly identify, distinguish and reflect upon value properties and connected normative reasons in various contexts. For instance, it is a part of prudential and ethical competence to be able to attend thematically to what is significant in a given context and to have a rich conceptual understanding of the often context-specific meanings of evaluative and deontic concepts in each situation. However, we must consider emotional awareness to tell the whole story. As it is given in experience, evaluative intentionality is not reducible to thematic attention, to the capacity for judgment, propositional, reflective, or categorizing modes of understanding, something easily presumed too quickly. Instead, these higher-order evaluative processes depend on emotion-based value sensitivity, a point to which I return in section 4. Sensitivity to values and normative reasons does not exclusively amount to the ability to judge wisely about objects, persons, or states of affairs. Pre-linguistic, pre-propositional, and pre-reflective modes of apprehension must be taken seriously into account if we are to understand value awareness adequately: Peripheral or ‘marginal’ awareness (Husserl, 1999 §§17-23) is an essential part of experienced value sensitivity (for similar points see Audi, 2013, 10; Dretske, 1994), and emotional intentionality is often a good example of such awareness. Value presentations that prompt emotional responses may come in the form of a predicative judgment that something is of value. However, they might as well come as a subtle emotional experience of something to be of value or even amount to the simple experience in the periphery of attention of some value property or properties, as is often the case in emotional experience.

This phenomenologically informed picture of emotions is consistent with classic *sub specie boni* understandings of emotional life and akin to contemporary appraisal models of emotion as found in psychology (Roseman, 2001). Further, it aligns well with (at least some versions of) so-called cognitive and perceptive philosophical theories of emotion (Ferran, 2008; Goldie, 2002; Nussbaum, 2003), although, as mentioned, it fits even better with accounts that emphasize not only the connection between evaluation and emotion, but their essential intertwinement (Maiese 2014; Furtak 2018;

Colombetti 2010). Emotional responses are in part constituted by some sort of appraisal or valuation, positive or negative. This phenomenal fact does not rule out that emotions can also be closely related to, and individuated in terms of, bodily feelings or self-presentations, physiological changes, and arousals as well as behavioral dispositions. The point is that an emotion by necessity involves a presentation of something being of value or disvalue, and to abstract from this fact is to abstract from something constitutive of the emotion, as made evident when we reconstruct how it is to experience having an emotion. When we analyze emotions phenomenologically, we cannot sharply distinguish them from intended value qualities in the basic sense of something being given in experience as positive or negative. Based on this point, we can consistently recognize that sometimes our emotion concepts denote dispositions to feel certain emotions rather than the present feelings (e.g., to hate or love S is not to constantly feel hatred or love for S). However, we must maintain that emotions have a necessary relation to occurrent, episodic emotions (or possibly other affective experienced events) since they are individuated partly in terms of how they are given in experience. Moreover, the fact that there is a necessary evaluation-emotion connection does not necessarily exclude that it may be possible to value something in a non-emotional mode of presentation, e.g., when one entertains the thought that justice or autonomy has value in a very abstract manner. I want to leave it open whether some minimal affection is present in such cases, and in any case, such abstract considerations amount to very 'thin' value apprehensions, a point to which I return in section 4.

In the flow of experience, emotional responses causally connect to experiences of something positive or negative, but in a phenomenological perspective, these elements have at the same time a constitutive connection: It makes no sense to have an experienced emotional response without it being a response to something of experienced value, i.e., something that has been given in experience at some point as valuable, in such a way that the experienced elements are presented as a whole not reducible to the sum of its parts. Each component of the full emotional experience is, in other words, an abstract part of an intertwined experienced whole, where one abstract element of experience gives rise to or founds the next. This is the case,

even where the value component is not in the focus of attention but only amounts to a simple seeming in the margin of experience. Suppose I experience joy because my daughter has just overcome her fear of water and is now swimming in the lake while having pleasant feelings of pride. I present the complex positive value of the situation in and through my emotion, even if I am not attentively aware of this evaluation. The value is presented in experience in an emotional mode of presentation: It is in and through the phenomenal fact that the situation moves me emotionally that I present the situation as being of positive value. The full intentional object of my emotion of joy contains both a non-evaluative doxastic aspect (the complex state of affairs presented) and an axiological aspect (the composite value comprised of several distinguishable value qualities attached to that state of affairs). For instance, I present my daughter's pleasant pride as of positive intrinsic value, but I further anticipate the likelihood of my daughter gaining confidence, and I expect a range of possible future valuable experiences for her now that she can swim. This expectation allows for the presentation of the situation as of instrumental value as well, even if the expectation is tacit and not attended to thematically.

Of course, we have the option of abstracting from the close connection of these structural elements of the emotional experience and separating them in thought. (After all, to make sense of the structure of emotions, such abstraction is in part what we do in a phenomenological analysis such as this one). However, in the original experience, we should not neglect that the emotional response is necessarily coupled with the valuing. The parts are abstract aspects of an experienced whole, a unified flow of experience, and only separated upon our act of abstraction: The separated elements are the result of our doing upon looking back in reflection, not a resemblance of how the emotional experience is *per se*. This point is crucial if we are to understand experienced emotions as such, and it is central if we are to understand the functions and dysfunctions of emotions in connection with the qualification of value sensitivity. On this background, we can analyze the non-cognitive idea of emotions as being purely conative as the result of precisely such an abstraction: Taking only the affective response-aspect of the emotional experience to be what defines 'emotion', the constitutive connec-

tion to valuing is left unrecognized. The phenomenological fact of this connection must at least serve as a fundamental *explanandum* for any non-cognitivist account. In any context of elucidating the epistemic processes of qualified value sensitivity, we must explain how emotions are experienced as possible sources amongst others of awareness of positive and negative values that provide *pro tanto* normative reasons for acting in different ways. In virtue of the intentional nature of emotions, they can be argued to have conditions of success and thus be possible (but fallible!) sources of value apprehension, and consequently, of, e.g., aesthetic, prudential, and ethical competence and understanding.

3. Phenomenon B: Emotions tend to prompt specific value attention

Many emotional responses, whether positive or negative, tend to make one sharpen and narrow the focus of attention on the experienced value object to which the emotional response is a response. This sharpened focus occurs typically in proportion to the intensity of the experienced valence of the emotional episode. The more intense one feels an emotional response, the more prone to focus on the value object to which it is a response. For instance, upon feeling fear or joy, the narrowed focus can come in the form of actively appreciating or dwelling on the joyful or the frightening situation. This point can also explain why we often have a hard time seeing the broader picture when we are very emotional (see section 5). This attentional function of emotions is distinguishable from the point made in the analysis of phenomenon A. It is a consequence rather than constitutive of the emotion (cf. Brady, 2014, 62): The focused attention on the value object is a typical (and perhaps even essential) consequence of many emotions rather than an essential part of all emotions. My fear of the drunk biker at the music venue is constitutively related to the representation of him as someone potentially dangerous (cf. A). Further, my emotion of fear makes me keep an extra eye on the biker's behavior and compels me to make sense of the evaluative details about him, which are the most dangerous (e.g., his machismo, his confrontative tendencies, his anti-empathic norms, his unreliability, and his drunkenness). This attentional focus is a typical consequential connec-

tion and may or may not be essential to my fear. Some empirical studies support the phenomenological point that at least some types of emotion (such as fear) tend to be closely linked to an involuntary direction of attention to value. The intensity of such an emotion tends to proportionally narrow one's focus to the positive or negative value presented emotionally (Faucher, 2002; Vuilleumier, 2005). However, we should be aware that this function probably cannot be attributed to all kinds of emotions since there are notable exceptions to this tendency. Disgust, antipathy, aversion, repugnance, and boredom are examples of emotions that often seem to have the opposite effect (Hugdahl, 2003; Tappolet, 2007): Although a sharpened focus on the object of the emotions can occur due to such emotions (for instance, in the form of dwelling on the negative), it is not unusual to focus attention *away* from what is presented as of negative value in such emotional experiences.

Nevertheless, causing a disposition in normal circumstances to focus on the value or disvalue might be typical to standard cases of joy, fear, and other common emotions and thus vital to value sensitivity in many contexts. It is fruitful to compare this epistemic function with ordinary sense perception: Does hearing a sound by necessity prompt you to pay attention to the sound? That seems doubtful since you can have all sorts of sensational inputs to which you pay no attention, including other auditory inputs. However, the informational input I get from the hearing can trivially be a reliable source of sensational knowledge even though it is not necessarily so, and we can account for this function in causal terms. In the same way, even if the consequential attention to value is not essential to the emotional response, given that emotions often cause the subject to attend to the value presented in the full emotional experience, they can play the central role in making us attend to value in various contexts.

Thus, many emotions dispose the subject to focus her attention on their intentional object under a value-laden aspect in an affective mode of presentation (Engelsen, 2018; de Sousa, 1987; Tappolet, 2012). (The attention-shaping function can also come in the form of a more isolated focus on the value quality, i.e., the axiological component of the emotion's intentional object). Presenting my daughter's pride as valuable in an emotional mode of

presentation, given my emotional response, I am at the same time prompted to focus my attention on the presented valued pride. This means that not only is the emotion a source of value information in the sense that it is essentially part of an experience that provides me with an evaluative input (cf. A), the response aspect of the emotion also further motivates my focused attention to the valued pride. I am literally moved by my joy to focus attention on the value quality presented in this emotional experience, making me appreciate and dwell on it. Just like hearing is the source of coming to know about sounds and hearing a sound will typically prompt you to attend to the sound in proportion to how loud it rings in your ears, the more intense the valence of the emotion is, the more it tends to motivate your attention to focus on the value object to which it is a response. This is also a typical part of the structure of what it is like to be 'caught' in one's emotion and become strongly emotionally aroused. A strong emotion often amounts to experiencing a kind of 'loop' between experiencing the value component and the affectual response: The response prompts you to focus again on the value, which then retriggers and perhaps enhances the affectual response and so on. We return to this point in section 5.

4. Phenomenon C: Emotional openness can play a crucial role in directly grasping determinate value

A third way in which I want to suggest that emotional life can shape value apprehension (closely related but not reducible to the ways already mentioned) is that a fundamental emotional openness makes a *direct grasp* of determinate value possible. Being emotionally open to values does not merely relate to emotions being intentional and thereby tracking value in various ways (cf. A) or to the consequential prompting of our attention to specific values (cf. B). It also concerns the point that certain intentional feelings can facilitate the ability to grasp axiologically relevant details of a situation in a direct mode of presentation. 'Direct' is not here to be understood in the sense of being completely unmediated. It refers to a non-inferential mode of presentation, often mediated or 'scaffolded' by certain expectations and prior experiences.

Let us consider some examples to illustrate the point. Cases of grasping aesthetic value are perhaps the most intuitively straightforward examples of this phenomenon: Representing the aesthetic value of a sunset without appreciating it in an affective mode of presentation just does not seem to get an adequate grasp of its full aesthetic value. Letting yourself feel and be moved by it, on the other hand, seems to enable you to precisely sense and appreciate subtleties and details of the aesthetic value complex in a way in which the ‘cold,’ unaffected attitude cannot. That does not rule out that there can be more abstract aesthetic aspects that are only apprehended through higher-order, more detached modes of presenting the matter.

This epistemic function relates to a fundamental phenomenological point about presentational modes: We easily lose sight of details when we do not present a given subject matter in a direct mode of presentation. To appreciate this point, consider a parallel to the difference between perceiving something in ordinary sense perception and presenting that same thing in a higher-order representation. Take the case of telling a friend about the peculiar guitar sound you heard at a show you attended last week. It woke up the drowsy crowd of indie rock enthusiasts because many had never heard anything like it. Trying to describe this sound to your friend who did not attend the show, you can try and appeal to similar sounds with which you know your friend to be acquainted: “It was something like the fuzzy tone from the classic Big Muff pedal, but with a twist of a more ‘warm’ distortion sound like that of a Tube screamer pedal, but at the same time it had an odd ring to it, sounding like the old MiniMoog synthesizer from this and that album, and so on....” Eventually, you give up explaining because you realize that the description of that complex sound, as you heard it in that specific context, can only amount to a thin and underdetermined description of its uniqueness. Basically, you must know that particular sound by acquaintance, through hearing it, to grasp its complexity in the sense of apprehending its detailed aspects. The same can be said in cases of visual representation: When you see the landscape in front of you, a vast complex of details is visually presented, and although telling about the landscape to someone might involve a conceptual precision about certain aspects of the scene, it will unavoidably amount to an abstraction from some of these details. The point

echoes a fundamental phenomenological one about the relation between acquaintance with something through direct experience and making the same thing a theme of attention in higher-order representations (Audi, 2003 p. 22-26; Husserl, 1999 §§ 7, 8, 13, 15, 16). Knowing something by acquaintance through perceiving it provides a far richer and more detailed informational input than judging, telling, or deliberating about it, because higher-order representations are necessarily formed through abstraction from some of the phenomenal qualities of the original experience. In forming them, you exclude details in the stream of experience to get a clearer picture of certain parts of the experiential input.

This point can be applied to the relation between presenting evaluative aspects of a situation in affectual modes of presentation and representing them in higher-order representations: Just like hearing the unique sound discloses its informational richness in a way that other modes of presenting it cannot, representing the aesthetic value of the music at a concert without being emotionally moved by it, typically makes you miss something vital to at least some aspects of the aesthetic value qualities of the music.

To further illustrate the point, consider some examples in other evaluative contexts, e.g., contexts of tragedy: When people share their grief or sorrow, for instance, in the case of parents having lost a child, their mutual understanding of the negative value, to which their feelings of sorrow are responses, is typically far richer in detail than the understandings of people not sharing the sorrow, even if the latter has a pretty good conception of the parents' loss and grief. Or suppose your spouse or child has been in an accident or has become seriously ill to the degree that it drastically disables and decreases the wellbeing of the near family. We quickly lose sight of the complex negative values connected with such tragedies in non-affective modes of presentation. The details and degree of significance of the disvalues are easily overlooked by others, even by people close to the family. One straightforward explanation of this fact is that they are not directly acquainted with the disvalues of the situation on a daily basis – through feeling them. Responding emotionally to the negative value seems to be part of a direct mode of presenting it, and specifics of the negative value seem to be lost as soon as you detach yourself emotionally from the matter. The detach-

ment amounts, in other words, to abstraction from aspects of the complexity and depth of significance of the value object. The ability to abstract from the phenomenal qualities of feelings connected with tragedy and similar value complexes undoubtably serves vital prudential and ethical functions in many situations. However, we should be aware that it may come at the price of losing sight of the depth of significance and details.

If feeling value is how we are directly acquainted with value (a point I have argued for at length elsewhere, Engelsen 2018), the analogy to perception makes good sense, at least in this respect: Any non-affective mode of presentation of value amounts to an abstraction from details in each evaluative context, and details are retained (and reminded of) when we come to know about values by acquaintance with them through feeling them. The point that to know value by acquaintance it must be felt connects with a fundamental phenomenological point about how we acquire the meanings of determinate value in experience: Certain phenomenal states of feeling, to which emotions are necessarily dependent but not reducible, can be argued to constitute the ‘raw material’ of our concepts of basic value properties, value-objects and value-states of affairs. To phrase the point in phenomenological terminology, feelings are the original modes of presentation of primary value qualities (Engelsen, 2018; for a similar point, see Prinz, 2009), in analogy to visual perception being the original mode of presenting primary colors. We form the meaning of fundamental values through phenomenal states of feeling, often closely intertwined with basic emotions. If you have learned and really grasped what the positive values of contentment, love, or happiness are about, or what characterizes the content of the negative values of sorrow, loss, or injustice (just to mention some phenomena widely acknowledged as having positive or negative value), at some point, you have tried to feel these value qualities, or more basic value qualities on which you construe their meanings. This phenomenological fact might be more intuitive to some when formulated in negative terms: If you have never felt a given simple value quality (e.g., never felt love, but only been told about it), you have not really grasped its full meaning. This point is parallel to, e.g., a natural-born deaf person who has learned about sounds but never heard

them. There is something essential to their sense which can arguably only be taught through first-personal experience.

Seen from the point of view of lived experience, we thus learn about primary values by experiencing them in occurrent affective modes of presentation. By letting the phenomenal properties of these feelings become ‘sedimented,’ or typified, as parts of our pre-understanding and experiential outlook, the ability to recognize and represent type-identical values in other modes of presentation develops. This sedimentation of the original affective value experiences enables us to re-present such values and disvalues in non-affective modes of presentation. Through abstraction, we can distinguish the value quality as such from its original affection – just like we can distinguish and represent the heard sound from hearing it. Moreover, – and this is the main point to emphasize in this section – such sedimentation can also dispose us to be fundamentally open to feeling specific (complexes of) positive and negative values and thereby, through experience, become directly acquainted with details about them in concrete situations. Being emotionally open to value is, according to this picture, not just the name of a disposition to feel with a meaning-constitutive function but can also denote a unique ability to evaluate context-specific details of a situation in a direct mode of presentation (for a similar point, see Johnston, 2001), just like having perceived a particular proto-typical shape can dispose one to present a type-identical shape directly in other situations.

That feeling is the original mode of presentation of value, and thus the most direct way to present value, provides us with an intelligible account of why the feelings of value can facilitate attention to context-specific details about determinate value. Just like perception tends to give you a more direct and rich understanding of properties and objects than, e.g., the memory of the same objects or properties, or by knowing about them through testimony or imagination, experiencing value in episodic emotions can present you directly with specific examples of positive or negative value in a way that higher-order evaluative representations cannot. Affectual experience can, in this way, have a disclosing function with regards to the presentation of determinate value. Feeling value lets you attend to and apprehend specific value details *directly* and thereby get a ‘thick’ rather than a ‘thin’

grasp of the value of something. It is a way to get a direct grasp of values and fine-grained value complexes hardly possible in non-affective modes of presentation. Being emotionally open to value requires thus that you are either actually feeling the basic value properties relevant in a situation, i.e., you present them in an affective mode of presentation, or that you have tried to feel that type of value (or the more fundamental values that constitute the value complex) and are in a state of readiness-to-feel. Such readiness means that you are immediately disposed to becoming affected by the values in a given context; you do not merely present them intellectually and cognitively.

5. Emotional Interference

As often emphasized in the history of ethical ideas, a problem with non-theoretical types of value apprehension, not least in their emotional forms, is that sometimes what we feel to be good, bad, right, and wrong reflects nothing but unreasonable prejudices, narrow perspectives, and unqualified gut reactions. However, there need not be any inconsistency in acknowledging a *Janus*-face of emotions in the context of evaluative understanding: We can consistently acknowledge that emotions can be reliable sources but also sometimes epistemically distorting. We can see this as part of a nuanced picture of the role of emotions in valuation. Some of what I have said so far about the connection between emotions and value apprehension can, in a relatively simple way, explain crucial aspects of the ambiguous nature of emotions with regard to their role in evaluative understanding.

Consider compassion as a case in point. In some situations, compassion can arguably be a tool for understanding other-regarding value – a paradigm example could be the negative value of someone's suffering (at least considered in isolation) – while in other situations, compassion can create a kind of evaluative blindness in the form of a bias towards certain persons, something that makes an impartial perspective impossible (Prinz 2014), a perspective often appropriate in ethical evaluation. We can apply the same point to my previous example about apprehending the complex value of my daughter's pride through my emotion of joy: Even though my joy about my

daughter's pride can provide a crucial informational input about value qualities and the good reasons they provide in the process of forming my evaluative beliefs, it could also be the very thing that interferes with my evaluative process when seen from a broader perspective. Suppose my joy about my daughter's pride blinds me from seeing the negative consequences of her pride. A positive value is experienced to supervene on the pleasantness of her pride, and this is something I come to know (cf. A, section 2), focus my attention on (cf. B, section 3), and appreciate the details of (cf. C, section 4) through my emotional experience. However, being prompted to focus attention on the value quality of her pride, I also tend to become narrow-minded. If I feel my joy very strongly, I can easily miss other reason-giving values otherwise in my experiential horizon. I can easily miss other values that I could have anticipated if my joy had not 'interfered'. It could be, for instance, that in the limited outlook of my joyful experience, I do not recognize something otherwise obvious: My daughter's pride about having learned to swim in the lake makes her brag and say things that are inconsiderate in a way that amounts to the mocking of one of her playmates who is still not confident in the water. In other words, other reason-providing value qualities escape my attention, and the joy thus prevents me from reliably forming a qualified, ethical evaluation of the situation. The premise here is that ethical understanding is about decisive normative reasons for acting, not just the *pro tanto* reasons provided by specific value qualities (e.g., the value of my daughter's pride), and decisive reasons arguably mirror (at least in this case) the overall value of a situation or what we have *most* reason to do all things considered (Parfit, 2011; Schafer-Landau, 2003; Engelsen, 2013; Husserl, 1988). Even if the value of my daughter's pride gives me a good reason for acting in a way that promotes and appreciates it, all things being equal, the negative value of the mocking and its consequences can provide stronger conflicting reasons for doing something else, something which my joy prevents me from seeing due to exactly its attention-shaping function.

The epistemic functions of emotions described in A, B, and C can thus be keys to understanding the two-faced nature of emotions in the context of assessing overall value since, on this basis, we can explain how the same emotion can be a relevant source of evaluative awareness and at the

same time be interfering in the process of an evaluative understanding as seen in the broader context of other values. The emotion of joy in our example is that mode of presentation with which I gain experiential access to axiologically important information, namely the *pro tanto* reason-giving value of the pride. At the same time, the joy is also that which prevents me from seeing the broader picture due to its attention-shaping functions and, therefore, that which prevents me from seeing what I have the most reason for doing. When you hear a noise so loud that it prevents you from hearing other sounds, the distorting noise is nevertheless a source of perceptual information, but it robs you of the broader perspective. In the same manner, the emotion intensively felt can be a source of information significant to an evaluative perspective while, at the same time, it can distort the broader evaluative picture.

7. Concluding remarks

Without losing sight of the epistemic problems connected with emotions in the context of value sensitivity, we should remind ourselves of the consequences of taking the phenomenology of emotions and value seriously. Given that phenomenological explication establishes an *explanandum* that any theory needs to account for, theories of emotion and value must account for the intertwinement of emotional and evaluative experience. At a fundamental level, our evaluative life is emotional and vice versa. From a phenomenological perspective, emotions serve the epistemic function of letting evaluative aspects and details come to mind that are otherwise likely to go unnoticed. We experience emotions as intentional states that track value, given that emotional responses are entangled with presentations of value and disvalue (cf. A, section 2). Emotional responses often make us focus attention on specific value qualities (cf. B, section 3), and sometimes a readiness to let ourselves feel certain emotions is needed to get into a state of mind where you can directly grasp context-specific evaluative details (cf. C, section 4), something that can be explained by the theory that feelings are the original mode of presentation of value. The same epistemic functions (A, B, and C) can also make intelligible what typically goes wrong when

emotions interfere with the ability to see things from a broader perspective (cf. section 5). In this light, a context-sensitive ability to down-regulate emotions – but notably, also up-regulate them when appropriate – can prove crucial to value sensitivity.

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