

## Which Attitudes for the Fitting Attitude Analysis of Value?

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**Abstract:** According to the fitting attitude (FA) analysis of value concepts, to conceive of an object as having a given value is to conceive of it as being such that a certain evaluative attitude taken towards it would be fitting. Among the challenges that this analysis has to face, two are especially pressing. The first is a psychological challenge: the FA analysis must call upon attitudes that shed light on our value concepts while not presupposing the mastery of these concepts. The second challenge is normative: the FA analysis must account for the fittingness of the relevant attitudes in terms of a kind of normativity intimately related to these attitudes, but again without presupposing the mastery of the relevant value concepts. In this paper, we show that real progress is possible if we pay close attention to the nature of the attitudes recruited by the analysis. More specifically, we claim that an FA analysis that appeals to emotions conceived as evaluative attitudes — as opposed to, for instance, evaluative judgements or evaluative perceptions — has the best prospects of meeting the two challenges and of putting the FA analysis on a strong footing.

**Keywords:** fitting attitude analysis, thick value concepts, emotions

According to a widespread and plausible approach, value should be understood in terms of fitting pro- and con-attitudes. This is the so-called *fitting attitude* analysis of value (in short, FA analysis).<sup>1</sup> Granting the initial plausibility of the FA analysis, our aim is to assess its capacity to meet some of the fundamental challenges it faces. We will do so by focusing on the nature of the attitudes and the type of fittingness that this approach recruits.

Two preliminary remarks. First, we understand the notion of fittingness at stake as what makes the relevant attitudes *correct* as opposed to justified or rational. This is to say that we will focus on what is often, and confusingly because we are not interested in epistemology, called the *epistemic fittingness of attitudes* (e.g., D’Arms and Jacobson, 2000). Second, it is sometimes observed that there are both *ontological* and *conceptual* strands within the FA analysis, although

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1 Franz Brentano (1889/1969) is often seen as the father of this approach and Ewing (1948, 1959) as one of its most notable advocates. See McDowell (1985) and Scanlon (1998) for influential defences. Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004) provide historical background and present some variants of the FA analysis. For a recent book-length discussion, see Orsi (2015).

arguments in the area tend not to rely on too sharp a distinction between the two. Still, they are significantly different. Consider the claim that an action is good if and only if it is fitting to have a pro-attitude towards it. This is a metaphysical account of value. Alternatively, one may claim that our conception of an object as good is the conception of a certain pro-attitude that fits that object. This is an account of our value concept. Independently of what we think of the connections between ontological and conceptual strands within the FA analysis, we propose to focus here exclusively on the latter. We are interested, that is, in the role a subject's understanding of her own psychological attitudes plays in shaping her understanding of the evaluative realm.

The aim of this paper is thus to flesh out an idea that is often put forward as a selling point of the FA analysis: its promise to dissipate the mystery surrounding value concepts by anchoring them in our attitudes. To fulfil this promise, the FA analysis makes three fundamental claims: (i) value concepts are not "simple" or "primitive" concepts; they are built out of two other concepts which are for this reason conceptually prior to value concepts.<sup>2</sup> (ii) The first building block of a value concept is the concept of the relevant attitude. (iii) The second building block is the concept of fittingness for the relevant attitude. We shall take these three claims for granted here and focus on the challenges faced by the idea that a subject builds her value concepts out of her own first-person understanding of these building blocks.

Now, why think that this is a fruitful approach, given that advocates of the FA analysis are so often happy to leave open the nature of the relevant attitudes?<sup>3</sup> Our point of departure is simply that this is not an option if the aim is to showcase the role of the subject's understanding of the relevant attitudes in shaping her value concepts. To assess the prospects of the FA analysis, we propose to focus on what we believe are the most promising attitudes, namely emotions. It has often been observed (Mulligan, 1998; D'Arms and Jacobson, 2000; D'Arms, 2005; Tappolet, 2016) that emotions are promising candidates for demystifying value concepts because many of the latter wear their affective origin on their sleeves; one may think of the concepts of the offensive, shameful, amusing, disgusting, admirable, joyful, regrettable, embarrassing, and so on. To use the

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2 Some conceptions of the relation between (concepts of) values and (concepts of) emotions do not accept this priority claim or, in other terms, do not consider circularity as a worry: they rely on a form of holism (Helm, 2001) or on a no priority view according to which the goal of an FA approach is to shed light on our value concepts rather than to offer an analysis in the strict sense (Wiggins, 1987). Nothing in what follows invalidates these conceptions. Still, there is intrinsic interest in examining whether a non-circular analysis is available. If none is, this would constitute a reason to elaborate further on the idea that the circularity at stake is virtuous.

3 One important exception is the work of D'Arms and Jacobson. See in particular D'Arms (2005).

received terminology, we must assess whether a subject can understand these *thick concepts* in terms of the relevant fitting emotions.<sup>4</sup> At the end of our discussion, we sketch how an emotional approach can be extended to other thick value concepts as well as to the *thin concepts* of the good and the bad.

The claim that these thick value concepts are anchored in a subject's understanding of her own emotions must deal with a variety of challenges, two of which will be our target here. What we will call the *psychological challenge* is concerned with meeting two constraints. The first, well-known constraint relates to the fact that the subject's understanding of the emotions involved in the FA analysis must not presuppose mastery of the value concepts at stake. For instance, the promises of the FA analysis could not be kept if, say, admiration amounts to simply judging that an object is admirable, because judging that an object is admirable presupposes mastery of the concept of this value. The FA analysis has thus better not adopt this form of judgementalism about the emotions (Solomon, 1993; Nussbaum, 2003). It then rests with the advocates of the FA analysis to recruit a view of the emotions in which having an emotion does not presuppose the mastery of value concepts. In a nutshell, the FA analysis should meet the *non-circularity constraint* (e.g., Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2004).

In striving for a non-circular analysis, it is important to meet another constraint, whose importance is often overlooked and at best left implicit. This second constraint relates to the fact that the emotions involved in the FA analysis should not be too remote from the values on which they are supposed to shed light; otherwise, we would not see how the subject could build her understanding of those values upon her understanding of these emotions. "Not too remote"? What does that mean? Let us imagine, for example, that we think of emotions as (un)pleasant *raw feels* — conscious states that do not represent anything (e.g., Goldstein, 2002; Whiting, 2011). Because raw feels are not pro-attitudes — at least not in the sense that the notion of fittingness applies to them — a subject's understanding of raw feels cannot shed light on her value concepts in the manner intended by the analysis. If emotions are raw feels, then, they are too remote from values to shed light on them. More generally, the FA analysis should explain how a subject's value concepts are *grounded in* her understanding of the emotions: it should meet what we will call the *groundedness constraint*. Sections 1 and 2 of the paper concentrate on this first, psychological challenge.

Even if the FA analysis meets the psychological challenge, it must still deal with a *normative challenge*. Here again, there are two constraints the FA analysis

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4 Williams (1985) introduced the distinction between *thin* and *thick* values in the contemporary literature. For recent discussions, see Kirchin (2013).

must meet, this time focusing on the second building block of value concepts: the notion of fittingness.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, understanding fittingness should not depend on mastery of the value concepts that the analysis targets. Suppose that the psychological challenge is met so that the subject understands, say, anger independently of her concept of offensiveness. If her concept of *fitting* anger is that of being angry at the offensive, the FA analysis remains circular. We again come across our *non-circularity constraint*, this time at the normative level.

Although the FA analysis must avoid circularity at the normative level, the kind of normativity it relies upon must once again not be too remote from the nature of the relevant emotions. Here is a dramatic way of driving the point home. Suppose that the concept of fittingness at stake is fixed by a set of divine orders; there would be fitting anger or fitting admiration when and only when the anger or the admiration targets a situation that God has chosen as worthy of our wrath or admiration. On this version of the FA analysis, the normativity of fittingness is in no way anchored in the nature of the relevant emotions. It would be hard to see in this case what we would gain from the detour via emotions: the concept of divine orders would directly elucidate what we mean by “offensive” and “admirable.” Because the FA analysis attempts to illuminate thick value concepts by drawing attention to the fact that they build upon the concepts of emotions and of fittingness, it can succeed only if emotions somehow *ground* the normative demands that a subject thinks govern them. This is the *groundedness constraint* pitched at the normative level.<sup>6</sup> Sections 3 and 4 concentrate on this normative challenge.

Our general aim, then, is to evaluate whether the FA analysis of the aforementioned thick value concepts in terms of fitting emotions can meet the psychological and normative challenges and do so in a way that is non-circular and grounded. Let us observe that, although we have said that the notion of fittingness at stake is that of *epistemic* fittingness, this will still evoke different ideas in the

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5 In order to avoid misunderstanding, let us emphasize again that by “normative” we are just referring to issues surrounding emotional fittingness understood as correctness and not to the reasons or justification a subject may have for an emotion (and which “normative” sadly conjures up in the minds of many).

6 The requirement that the FA analysis be grounded at the normative level is rarely acknowledged. It is certainly alien to approaches that try to elucidate value concepts in terms of a normativity that is projected onto the attitudes from the outside, so to say. In addition to the ethical supernaturalism just alluded to, constructivist and contractualist approaches of various stripes come to mind. This is not the place to discuss constructivism and contractualism, so let us simply observe that the project of demystifying values by appealing to fitting attitudes does not sit easily with the kind of normativity these approaches appeal to. The normative groundedness constraint informs the writings of neo-sentimentalists such as D’Arms (2005) and D’Arms and Jacobson (e.g., 2000), whose explicit aim is to demystify values. It also surfaces explicitly in McHugh and Way’s (2016) and Sharadin’s (2016) recent contributions. See also Dokic and Lemaire (2015).

minds of different theorists of the emotions. Rather than start with an abstract characterization, we will let an account of emotions and their fittingness in terms of readiness to interact with the environment progressively emerge and will take the opportunity to explore some of its ramifications in section 4. More generally, we hope to contribute to the debate by examining in some detail how different theories of emotions; in particular, the attitudinal theory we have developed (Deonna and Teroni, 2012a, 2012b, 2015, 2017) might fare with respect to meeting the aforementioned challenges. In so doing, we hope to illustrate how attention to issues in the philosophy of mind can help us gain traction in meta-ethical debates.

We start with the psychological challenge. In section 1, we explain why the FA analysis should not recruit any of the popular perceptual theories, according to which emotions have *evaluative content*. These theories cannot meet the psychological challenge. Section 2 presents the advantages of the attitudinal theory, according to which emotions are *evaluative attitudes* relating us to values without these values featuring in their content. We argue that, because the attitudinal theory meets the psychological challenge, it earns the right to address the normative challenge. In section 3, we explain how we can meet this second challenge. Section 4 dispels some worries regarding the kind of fittingness at play in the attitudinal theory. In conclusion, we indicate some ways of extending the present approach to cover a broader range of value concepts.

### 1. FA and Emotional Content

As we have seen, an FA analysis of thick value concepts based on emotions faces a psychological challenge that consists in two constraints. The first is the non-circularity constraint: we should characterize emotions independently of the value concepts that we seek to understand. The concept of amusement should be characterized independently of the concept of the funny, for instance, and the concept of anger independently of the concept of offence. This section presents some contemporary approaches to the emotions that, because they involve the idea that emotions connect us to thick values, combine naturally with the FA analysis. In answering the question whether we can meet the psychological challenge by adopting one of these approaches, we argue that this is impossible if we situate the relation between emotions and thick values at the level of the *representational content* of emotions. We will explain what we mean by that in due time.

First, let us recall that an FA analysis cannot identify the relevant emotions with evaluative judgements because these judgements require the use of the value concepts that we seek to explain. To avoid this problem, we will need to think of emotions as psychological states that do not presuppose the use of these concepts.

This strategy is at the heart of perceptual theories of emotions, which apply to emotions the widespread idea that perceptual experiences have non-conceptual content (e.g., Crane, 1992).

It is natural to understand non-conceptual evaluative content in terms of the distinctive way emotions present themselves to the subject. To see a red surface is to be visually struck by its redness in a way that does not require the capacity to think of it as red or as coloured. Likewise, being amused at a good joke amounts to being emotionally struck by its funniness, and to be irked by a remark is to be struck by its offensiveness (Wringe, 2014; Tappolet, 2016). Like judgementalism, perceptual theories acknowledge that emotions are about values, but these theories have a twofold advantage over judgementalism. First, by insisting that the representation is non-conceptual, perceptualists allow for the attribution of emotions to animals and young children (Roberts, 1996; Tappolet, 2016). Second, in emphasizing that emotions are experiences, perceptual theories can take into account the causal and potentially epistemic relations between emotions and evaluative judgements (Döring, 2007; Tappolet, 2016).

For the advocate of the FA analysis, adopting a perceptual theory would thus seem to be a step in the right direction because to feel an emotion would not presuppose the use of the value concepts that she seeks to analyse. This, however, is an illusion. For we are not interested here in emotions themselves but rather in *concepts* of emotions: the conceptual FA analysis tries to elucidate value concepts in terms of concepts of emotions. If we are to accept that emotions are perceptions of values, we need to ask which *concepts* of emotions a subject might ground on these perceptions. To the extent that emotions are subjectively experienced as perceptual presentations of values, it seems that the response to this question is that the concept of a given emotion is of the presentation of a given value. Using this model of perception to account for emotions (we will see that there are other options) means accepting that values present themselves to the emoting subject in a manner analogous to how perceived properties present themselves to the perceiving subject.

How should we go about characterizing this perceptual presentation of values? It is often observed that describing perceptual experiences from the first-person perspective amounts to describing what they (re)present. Describing the perceptual experience of a blue vase is describing the spatial and chromatic properties of the vase from the subject's point of view. For this reason, perceptual experiences are said to be *transparent* (Harman, 1990; Martin, 2002). If they are transparent, whoever grounds a concept on her experiences — whoever grounds a concept of blue experiences on her visual experiences of blue, for example — conceives these experiences in terms of the properties that they present to her. These properties are, after all, the only thing to which she has access.

This is difficult to reconcile with an FA analysis of value concepts. Taking the model of perception seriously requires taking the notion of transparency seriously, and this means concluding that the concept of amusement is the concept of an experience of the funny, the concept of anger is the concept of the experience of the offensive, and so on. An FA analysis combined with a perceptual approach to emotions is not in a better position than judgmentalism to meet the psychological challenge; the analysis is still circular, even if the circle is wider.<sup>7</sup>

This conclusion might be too hasty, however: the defender of a perceptual theory can circumvent the difficulty by arguing that the description “perception of value” does not mirror the way emotions are experienced from the subject’s point of view. This strategy aims at showing that concepts of emotions grounded in emotional experiences are not concepts of perceptual experiences of the relevant values. Without attempting to exhaust the possibilities, we will consider two approaches: the first invokes the representation of concerns; the second takes its inspiration from James.

The first option, developed by Robert Roberts (2003), is to think of “perception of value” in terms of the *representation of the subject’s concerns as satisfied or frustrated*. In anger, for instance, the subject is not struck by the offensiveness of a remark; rather, she appreciates that she finds herself in a situation that threatens her concern for her honour. Of course, in the framework of a perceptual theory, the understanding at stake cannot involve belief. The idea is that the subject understands the situation as frustrating her concern in the same way as she can see an object as an object of a certain type (e.g., see a metal as gold). This is often automatic, immediate, and compatible with the judgement that the object is not of that type. If perceiving values is perceiving connections between situations and concerns, this opens the door to a non-circular analysis of value concepts in terms of concepts of emotions.

Can this approach meet the psychological challenge? The groundedness constraint is easily met because the attitudes recruited are close to how we intuitively grasp values. It makes a lot of sense to think of the relevant value concepts as responsive to the fact that we think of ourselves as being driven by concerns that the course of events may favour, threaten, or thwart. What is there to say regarding the non-circularity constraint? This constraint can be met if emotions are sufficiently independent from values for the concepts of emotions not to presuppose the relevant value concepts. If, as the approach contends, emotions present

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7 Observe that our argument is neither that the perceptual theory of the emotions is wrong-headed, nor that it is an unconvincing picture of our access to value properties. We only claim that it is irreconcilable with the FA analysis.

themselves as representations of satisfied or frustrated concerns, can the subject form concepts of emotions without referring to these values?

The response must be qualified because it depends on how we characterize the concerns in question. We cannot, for instance, analyse fear in terms of the concern *to avoid danger*, anger in terms of the concern *to redress offence*, and so on, or the FA analysis will remain circular. Things are different, however, if we appeal to the concerns for *safety* (fear) and *honour* (anger). Combining this concern-based approach to emotions to the FA analysis may lead us to think that the threat of circularity subsides. The concepts of fear and anger would be structured around the representation of concerns for safety and honour, two concepts that are admittedly independent of those of danger and offence.<sup>8</sup> But observe that these concerns are still evaluative. Although safety and honour may be values that are independent from danger and offence, they are nonetheless values. The consequence is that the approach sells short any possibility for the FA analysis to throw light on the value domain: it acknowledges that subjects who develop concepts of emotions possess value concepts that owe nothing to their concepts of emotions. This is the only way to avoid circularity. As a consequence, the core promise of the FA analysis is not kept. Because concepts of emotions derive from an independently constituted set of value concepts, the former cannot constitute the source of the latter. In light of the resulting FA analysis, value concepts remain as mysterious as they were at the outset.<sup>9</sup> Interpreting “perception of value” as “perception of the frustration or satisfaction of a concern” therefore does not help meeting the psychological challenge. This is not a satisfactory way of combining a perceptual theory with the FA analysis.

Let us then explore another way of understanding the idea that emotions are perceptions of values. We find it in the Jamesian approach developed by Jesse Prinz (2004), who conceives emotions as *bodily feelings that are aroused by the presence of evaluative properties*. Amusement is the feeling of bodily changes triggered by funny situations; anger is the feeling of bodily changes triggered by offensive situations, and so on and so forth. Some of these links have a strictly biological base, whereas others are set up during development and acculturation. How does this approach take into account the connection between emotions and

8 One can support this independence with the observation that these concerns are sufficiently generic for them to correspond to different values. Thus, honour is not only at stake in offensive situations (anger) but in degrading situations (shame) as well.

9 We may wonder if it is part of the FA analysis' brief to shed light upon value concepts *without remainder*. For someone who subscribes to the idea that the normative is autonomous, there is no way of stepping completely outside of the normative domain to shed light on it. This may be true, and we come back to this issue in section 4. This being said, Roberts' concerns will deliver a gerrymandered set of primitive value concepts that is an unpromising starting point for the defence of the autonomy of the normative.



values? The link is clearly indirect: the subject is directly aware of bodily changes and, indirectly, of their cause, namely the value that arouses her emotion. From the subject's standpoint, only the bodily changes are manifest; the relevant value features only in a judgement establishing a link between the bodily feelings and the evaluative situation that causes them. It is only through such a judgement, which is optional, that the subject takes an evaluative perspective (Deonna and Teroni, 2012b: chap. 6).

Can this approach meet the psychological challenge? By appealing to the idea that emotional experiences are elicited by values without presenting these values to the subject, the approach is ideally placed to meet the non-circularity constraint. Indeed, the concepts of emotions that a subject bases on her emotional experiences are structured around the properties that these experiences present to her directly, namely, patterns of bodily changes. Because the concept of such a pattern does not presuppose the concept of the relevant value, it is tempting to combine the FA analysis with Prinz's approach.

The situation is less clear regarding the groundedness constraint. It is true that bodily changes are remote enough from our intuitive understanding of values for avoiding circularity, but are they not too remote to ground this understanding? One can fear that they are. To feel the acceleration of one's heartbeat, to feel oneself breaking out into a sweat, or to feel any other muscular contractions are indeed intentional states. They are not, however, directed at the bearer of the relevant thick value but at our body, which is not what we consider dangerous in an episode of fear or offensive in an episode of anger. On this approach, it makes no sense to think of emotions as psychological states that fit or do not fit some situations.

Does this conclusion follow as straightforwardly as we have claimed? After all, Prinz emphasizes that values, even though they are not the immediate objects of our emotions, are their mediate objects. Let us grant this.<sup>10</sup> Still, what is presented to the subject feeling an emotion is a sequence of bodily changes in which the relevant value does not feature. This does not mean that the subject cannot build a concept of value on this emotional experience but that this concept will be the concept of a cause of the bodily changes that she feels. On this "emotions as mere signals" picture, this is the only possible contribution of emotions to value concepts. This observation creates a dilemma, however. On the one hand, the concept of "unknown causes of felt bodily changes" may elucidate thick value concepts. But to accept that it does is to give up the FA analysis and adopt a purely dispositional account of these concepts.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, one may

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10 This concession entails accepting the teleosemantics framework (Millikan, 1987; Dretske, 1995) with which the approach at stake is in line.

11 This is in fact the approach that Prinz himself defends (Prinz, 2007).

choose to stay within the framework of the FA analysis, but it is then unclear how the concept of “cause of bodily changes” elucidates our value concepts. Once again, we are not denying that the Jamesian approach can emphasize that emotions, as felt bodily changes, signal the presence of values. We want to highlight that nothing in these signals can ground an understanding of the values at stake. This is why thick value concepts do not refer to bodily changes of this type.

In this section, we have argued that contemporary approaches according to which emotions have an *evaluative content* cannot meet the psychological challenge. From the observation that the FA analysis cannot (if it is to meet the *non-circularity constraint*) combine with the idea that emotions present themselves as perceptions of values, we explored two ways of escaping circularity by refusing to take the description “perception of value” literally. We concluded that, whereas Roberts’s concern-based approach can meet the *groundedness constraint*, it leads to an FA analysis that fails to generalize and so loses much of its appeal. Things do not fare better for the Jamesian approach, which promotes a conception of emotions in terms of bodily feelings that fails to elucidate their role in our understanding of values. In sum, the FA analysis does not combine in a promising way with approaches to emotions according to which they have an evaluative content.

## 2. FA and Emotional Attitudes

The conclusion of the previous section motivates the exploration of an alternative approach, according to which emotions do not have evaluative content. This is the strategy we pursue, a strategy which builds upon the benefits of thinking of the emotions as specific types of evaluative *attitudes* (Deonna and Teroni, 2012a, 2012b, 2015, 2017). Although it is not the place to lay out the attitudinal theory in all detail, let us spell out the core ideas behind it.<sup>12</sup> We will then see that the prospects for meeting our challenges are much brighter once we remove the value from the content and place it at the level of the attitude.

Our point of departure is to emphasize how intuitively plausible it is to think of emotions like shame, fear, and admiration as different attitudes rather than one and the same attitude — for example, that of judging or perceiving — directed at different values. Does it not make sense to conceive of shame, fear, and admiration as three distinct attitudes that we take towards something? Is the contrast between these emotions not more like that between desiring, believing, and conjecturing than that between believing one proposition and believing another?

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<sup>12</sup> For a concise introduction to the theory, see Scarantino and de Sousa (2018). For discussion, see Dokic and Lemaire (2015), Mitchell (2020), and Rossi and Tappolet (2019).

Responding positively to both questions means approaching the issue as follows: the difference between emoting, judging, and perceiving, just like the difference between types of emotions, is primarily a difference at the level of the attitudes taken towards a content rather than a difference at the level of content.

This is indeed a natural way to think of the matter and one that is in keeping with how philosophers of mind tend to think of psychological attitudes. Believing is related to truth in a way that does not require truth to feature in the content of belief; it is related to truth in virtue of being the very attitude it is, not because the subject deploys the concept of truth. Our suggestion is to think of the relation between, for example, anger and offence along the same lines: being angry is related to offence in virtue of being the very attitude it is, not because it represents offence (Deonna and Teroni, 2012a, 2015; see also de Sousa, 1987, p. 156).

It is one thing to say that values are not part of the content of emotions; it is another to provide a positive account of emotional attitudes. We think that the Jamesian approach broached in section 1 rightly emphasizes the embodied nature of emotions but that it fails to describe accurately the role of the body in emotional awareness. According to us, we should reject the idea that the relevant bodily feelings are arrays of sensations localized in different parts of the body. This is what leads to the idea, difficult to reconcile with a FA analysis, that emotions relate to values as “mere signals.” How it feels to experience the bodily changes characteristic of an emotion must be understood instead in a global or holistic way as the experience of assuming a stance, a posture, or an attitude towards a situation occurring beyond the body.<sup>13</sup> This appeal to an awareness of the body that is more global and directed outwards contrasts with the atomist conception of bodily feelings that we saw at work in Prinz’s approach.

We can pursue this line of thinking by recruiting a feature of emotions that contemporary approaches often highlight: *action tendencies* (Frijda, 1986, 2007; Scarantino, 2014). To speak of the experience of an action tendency allows for the interesting development of the idea that emotions, as felt bodily attitudes, are linked to values. *Action tendencies* is meant here in a broad sense that includes tendencies to avoid, approach, or move away from an object — to focus on it, yield to it, be attracted to it, free oneself from it, or even to pause all interaction with it. The idea is that, in fear, we feel our body as mobilized to neutralize something; in anger, we feel a preparedness for a form of active hostility; in

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13 Note that, according to our approach, emotions are feelings of the body as engaged or mobilized in a certain manner towards the environment. The felt body is not the object of the emotions. The “of” at play when we speak of the “feeling of the body as engaged” specifies the type of feeling and does not entail that the body is the intentional object of the attitude. On the distinction between the “of” of specification and that of intentionality, see Massin (2013) and Teroni (2017).

shame, we feel a promptness to move away from the gaze of the person causing the emotion; and, when we are sad, we feel deprived of the possibility to interact with the lost object.<sup>14</sup>

Highlighting in this way the agential dimension of emotions' phenomenology puts us in a position to articulate in an appealing manner one fundamental aspect of the link between emotions and values. Anger towards a person is an evaluative attitude because as it is an experience of the body as prepared for hostility, an attitude which is fitting if and only if the person is offensive. Admiration towards a person is another evaluative attitude because it is an experience of the body as being opened up to sustained and expanding exploration of the person, an attitude which is fitting if and only if the person is admirable. Sadness about the absence of a person is an evaluative attitude in virtue of being an experience of the body as deprived of the possibility to interact with it — joint projects, intimate moments, and so forth are experienced as being forestalled or impossible, an attitude that is fitting if and only if the absence of the person is a loss. Shame is a fourth evaluative attitude, in which we feel our body as ready to disappear out of the gaze of those denigrating us, an attitude which is fitting when we are indeed in a degrading circumstance.

These are some examples of the attitudinal account of the link between emotions and values that we wish to exploit. As opposed to the conceptions relying on evaluative content discussed in section 1, it rejects the idea that values feature in the content of emotions. An emotion fits a given value in virtue of being the attitude it is. This aspect of the attitudinal account, as we will now argue, puts it in an ideal position to meet our challenges.

As a reminder, the *psychological challenge* consists in meeting two constraints: the concept of a given emotion must not presuppose that of the relevant value (the *non-circularity constraint*), while still being apt to shed light on our understanding of this value (the *groundedness constraint*).

Regarding the non-circularity constraint, the attitudinal theory has the same advantage as the Jamesian approach discussed above. According to the attitudinal theory, the subject feeling an emotion experiences a tendency to act. The concept of such a felt tendency to act, as the concept of a configuration of bodily feelings, does not presuppose the concept of a value. Moreover, by contrast with the picture of value concepts fostered by Prinz's approach, the concept of a felt tendency to act does not promote the idea that emotions are "mere signals" of values; the tendency to act is not only experienced as a stance or attitude towards something typically outside of one's body, it is also key to our understanding of the relevant

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14 Observe that, in order to fulfil its promises and apply to emotions with no clear link to overt action — think of sadness or aesthetic contemplation — the attitudinal theory may have to extend the notion of felt bodily stance to activities that are primarily attentional.

value concepts. This brings us to the second constraint. It seems to us generally plausible that our value concepts are grounded in our concepts of felt tendencies to act. Is it not plausible that one fundamental building block of concepts such as those of slight, loss, and the admirable are concepts of distinct forms of engagement with the environment — hostility in the case of slight, forestalled interactions in the case of loss, and sustained attention in the case of the admirable? We think, along with many others (e.g., Dewey, 1895; Frijda, 1986, 2007; Gert, 2018) that the agential dimension of these descriptions captures one of the key elements of a large class of thick value concepts in a convincing way. This should encourage us to give an affirmative answer to the question: thick value concepts are grounded in our understanding of certain forms of engagement.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, this is at best a *partial* elucidation of thick value concepts. These concepts are evaluative, and the promise of the FA analysis is to explain them in terms of *fitting* emotions, something that the mere concept of a felt tendency to act cannot deliver. But that is all right. We take it that we have said enough to show that the attitudinal approach can meet the psychological challenge. What remains to be seen is whether it can also meet the normative challenge.

### 3. From the Psychological to the Normative

The normative challenge arises from the fact that the FA analysis appeals to *fitting* attitudes. There are, then, two new constraints to meet. On the one hand, the concept of a fitting emotion must not invoke the concept of the relevant value. This is the *normative* version of the non-circularity constraint. On the other hand, the notion of fittingness at play must not be too remote from the nature of emotions; otherwise, there would, again, be no apparent purpose for the detour via emotions. This is the normative version of the groundedness constraint.

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<sup>15</sup> In addition to being intrinsically plausible, the idea that thick value concepts build upon concepts of felt tendencies to act compares favourably with other approaches to thick value concepts in the context of an FA analysis. A first alternative approach is to understand thick value concepts as *observational* concepts (on the model of the concept of red, perhaps). This approach is incompatible with the FA analysis, whose basic insight is that we should dispel the mystery surrounding value concepts by anchoring them in concepts of fitting attitudes. To claim that value concepts are observational concepts is to reject this basic insight and deny that value concepts are in need of elucidation. A second alternative approach is to understand thick value concepts as *purely recognitional* concepts (think of the recognitional skills of a craftsman, for instance). Given that these concepts are not, at the first-person level at least, composed of more primitive conceptual building blocks, this approach is also irreconcilable with the FA analysis. Lest we be misunderstood, let us emphasize again that our aim here is not to assess the plausibility of these alternative approaches to thick value concepts but to explore the options available to advocates of the FA analysis. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for asking us to clarify this issue.

Let us start with the problem of circularity, which pertains to any conception of emotions that we can combine with the FA analysis. Does the concept of a fitting emotion presuppose the concept of the relevant value? Can we understand fitting anger without understanding offensiveness? To our mind, we can. The key is not to rely directly on the value but instead on the *natural* properties that, in given circumstances, constitute the value.

Here is a simple case to illustrate. Suppose you are in a park, sitting on a bench and enjoying the novel you are reading. As happens too often, an intruder sits very close to you and starts a loud conversation on his phone. You get angry at him. Your anger is fitting if you are aware of the properties (proximity, interruption of ongoing activity, loud noise, apparent lack of awareness of your presence) which, in the circumstances, constitute an offence, and you get angry because you are aware of these properties. The idea here is to consider particular cases as primary in the aetiology of the concept of a fitting emotion. This concept is, in the case under consideration, that of an emotion responding to a constellation of natural properties, such as loud noise in close proximity, apparent lack of awareness of one's presence, and the like, whereas in a different case of anger the constellation of natural properties may be quite different. These different concepts of fitting emotions, which are made up of constellations of different natural properties (let us call these the *fitting-making properties* of emotions), may converge on the concept of offence, but they do not presuppose its use. Advocates of an FA analysis may thus recruit this promising conception of fitting emotions.<sup>16</sup>

This account of concepts of fitting emotions in terms of natural properties of course raises many questions. Fortunately, because we are focusing on the non-circularity constraint, we can limit ourselves to the following issue: one might object that understanding what makes an emotion fitting presupposes awareness that the relevant natural properties constitute a value. According to this line of thought, a subject conceives of her anger as fitting only if she grasps the intruder's behaviour under the guise of danger. The concept of a fitting emotion would be the concept of an emotion aroused by natural properties *grasped under an evaluative guise* (Zangwill, 2001; Mulligan, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; Müller, 2017).<sup>17</sup> But how is this idea supposed to create an objection to the account of concepts of fitting emotions sketched above?

16 Echeverri describes this approach as the "simple view" (Echeverri, 2019). In the affective domain, it is defended in Goldie (2004) and Deonna and Teroni (2012b). Outside of this domain, it has close affinities with the approaches to reasons independently developed by Dancy (2004), Scanlon (1998), and Setiya (2012). Note, however, that all these approaches are concerned with issues of justification or rationality as opposed to fittingness.

17 The reader may remember a claim that has already surfaced in footnote 9 and that many moral philosophers find appealing, namely that the normative is autonomous. The idea under discussion, according to which concepts of fitting emotions are inextricably linked with thick value concepts, is a way of defending the autonomy claim. What follows in this section are reasons why we think it can be resisted.

To answer, let us first observe that the objection should probably not target the way the account understands fittingness itself. If an emotion responds to what we have called fitting-making properties, this seems sufficient for it to be fitting. It is hard to see why the subject should in addition grasp this fact.<sup>18</sup> Things are different, however, if the objection focusses instead on the *concept* of fittingness, which is fair game because the FA analysis identifies thick value concepts with concepts of fitting emotions. Conceiving of natural properties as fitting-making properties cannot boil down to conceiving these natural properties *tout court* because this would miss the distinctively normative side of the concept.<sup>19</sup> The concept of a fitting emotional attitude surely demands that the subject conceives of the relevant natural properties as favouring or meriting this attitude. Pitched at the conceptual level, we indeed have a serious objection, namely that to think of an emotional attitude as fitting is to think of it as being aroused by natural properties *grasped under the guise of the relevant thick value*. This would again mean that the FA analysis is circular.

Still, why would the concept of fitting-making properties depend on the relevant value concept (e.g., why would conceiving that natural properties favour anger presuppose conceiving that they constitute an offence)? Motivations in this regard are not always clear; however, one reason for countenancing such a dependence is to insist that there is otherwise no hope of generating a concept of fittingness for a given emotion type *with the suitable level of generality*. The subject possesses the relevant concept of fittingness only if she appreciates what each of the various constellations of natural properties that can make a specific emotion fitting have in common (i.e., that they all are instances of a thick value). Is the train of thought leading to that conclusion sound?

If it is, then the FA analysis cannot illuminate the domain of value. According to the objection, concepts of fitting emotions are anchored in the relevant value concepts — an order of explanation that is at odds with the FA analysis. Advocates of the FA analysis should therefore insist that the concept of fittingness for an emotion type *is anchored in particular cases*. In light of the objection under

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18 The situation may have been different if we were focussing on issues of emotional *justification* instead of emotional *fittingness*. The objection would then give voice to a form of internalism according to which considerations justify a psychological state only if the subject conceives them as favouring this state. Whether or not we are sensitive to these internalist worries, this is not what we are concerned with here.

19 Anti-naturalists in metaethics (e.g., Dancy, 2007; Parfit, 2011: vol. II, pp. 266–267) are keen to emphasize a distinction closely related to the one put forward here. This is the distinction between considerations that favour attitudes or actions, on the one hand, and the “meta-fact” that these considerations favour attitudes or actions. Couched in the terms of this metaethical debate, our issue is the following: even if we accept that the concept of considerations that favour an emotion can be specified non-circularly, we may still wonder whether this is the case for the relevant meta-fact.

discussion, anchoring concepts of fitting emotions in concepts of constellations of natural properties as we have done seems the way to go in order to meet the normative version of the non-circularity constraint. On our understanding of the FA analysis, this is not much of a surprise: the FA analysis of a thick value concept calls for a concept of fittingness for an emotion type that is independent of this value. Otherwise, the promise to dissipate the mystery surrounding value concepts by anchoring them in concepts of fitting emotions turns out to be empty.

Although we will pick up on this point shortly, let us first observe that we can now realize that one of two things must be true: the objection assumes either that thick value concepts need no elucidation (e.g., they are simple or primitive concepts that we have to take for granted) or that we can shed light on these concepts by other means than through concepts of fitting emotions. If the former, then the issues raised are beyond the scope of our discussion; remember that we take for granted the idea, shared by all advocates of the FA analysis, that thick value concepts are not simple but built out of concepts of attitudes and of fittingness. If the latter, then the challenge for the opponent of the FA analysis is to come up with a convincing non-emotional account of thick value concepts. This is again outside the scope of our discussion.<sup>20</sup> As far as we are concerned, we will focus on the parallel challenge for the FA analysis: to explain in a convincing way how thick value concepts are anchored in concepts of fitting emotions, where fittingness is understood, as suggested above, in terms of natural fitting-making properties. The reader may have realized that this is another way of saying that the FA analysis still needs to meet the normative version of the groundedness constraint, to which we now turn.

Remember that the groundedness constraint requires us to show that the subject's understanding of fittingness depends on her understanding of the nature of the emotions it applies to; for, again, there would otherwise be no point in making a detour via the emotions in order to understand the notion of fittingness at the heart of the FA analysis. Let us make this vivid through the following analogy. According to etiquette, it is fitting for forks to be placed to the left of the plate. It is fair to say that nothing in the nature of forks or plates constrains this normative practice. Because our understanding of cutlery does not constrain the notion of fittingness in any manner, it would be ill-advised to look into cutlery in order to understand the nature of fittingness regarding etiquette. By contrast, it

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20 We already had the opportunity to allude to two alternative approaches, which understand thick value concepts as observational or as purely recognitional concepts, in footnote 15. Yet another approach would consist in arguing that the subject's understanding of her emotion's fittingness to a particular situation depends upon her general knowledge of the relations between constellations of natural properties and thick value properties. For discussion of the challenges raised by this last approach, see Echeverri (2019, pp. 554–557) and McGrath (2018, pp. 71–80).



would be well-advised to examine human beings in order to understand why, according to morality, it is fitting not to harm another without reason because it is the human capacity for suffering that underscores this normative practice. This is why it does not apply to minerals or robots.

Is the concept of fittingness for a given emotion type linked to emotions of that type in a manner comparable to the way rules of etiquette apply to cutlery, that is, independently of the natures of the relevant entities; or comparable to the way moral rules apply to human beings, that is, in virtue of their natures? The position underlying the objection to the FA analysis discussed above is modelled on the first option: it suggests that the normativity at play will be elucidated by means of a non-emotional account of thick value concepts. By contrast, the FA analysis must go for the second option: it aims to elucidate value concepts through concepts of fitting emotions, which requires that the notion of fittingness be intimately linked to our understanding of emotions.

We thus need to scrutinize the notion of fittingness at play and its link to emotions. What does it take for a subject to understand that fear, anger, or admiration fits some situation? Here is an appealing response: *she must understand that these situations deserve certain forms of avoidance, retribution, or sustained attention*. Now, you will have recognized that these types of interactions are precisely those that are privileged in the attitudinal theory endorsed in section 2: according to it, these are the interactions to which emotions prepare us and that we experience when we feel emotions. The concept of fittingness for a certain type of emotion is then genuinely informed by the nature of that emotion. This not only constitutes an elucidation of thick value concepts in terms of concepts of fitting emotions, it also generates a concept of fittingness for a given emotion type *with the suitable level of generality*. Here is how.

The advocate of the FA analysis insists that our understanding of fitting-making properties is grounded on the emotions aroused by paradigmatic situations (de Sousa, 1987; D'Arms and Jacobson, 2005). We possess a more-or-less innate capacity to respond with specific emotions to certain constellations of natural properties and our concept of fittingness for these emotions develops piecemeal on this basis. Think of the aetiology of the concept of offence, which starts with reactions to paradigmatic situations that constitute unjustified encroachments on the ends that an agent pursues (jostling someone, intrusion on one's private space, etc.), then moves on to more complex situations (a long wait before an appointment), finally extending to distant events (political scandals abroad). Even if our affective sensitivity is able to develop in diverse ways, the crucial point is that its plasticity has limits. This limited plasticity is due to the nature of the relevant emotion: an emotion is cut for a distinct type of interaction; it is sufficiently generic to potentially fit a variety of concrete situations but at the same time

sufficiently specific to constrain the sorts of situations that it may fit. According to the FA analysis, the concept of fittingness for a given emotion type is the concept of the various constellations of natural properties *that are fitting objects for a distinct type of interaction*. From the subject's perspective, this is what these constellations of properties have in common, and this does not presuppose an independently constituted concept of the relevant thick value.

If these considerations regarding anger are generalizable — and it seems to us that amusement, shame, admiration, sadness, and the like are all cases in point — this suggests that our concepts of fittingness for different emotions can be anchored in our understanding of emotions as preparing us for specific kinds of interactions. Given that this understanding of fittingness for an emotion is anchored in the nature of the emotion, it seems that we have met the groundedness constraint.<sup>21</sup>

This concludes our proposal regarding how we think the normative challenge can be met.<sup>22</sup> It remains to be seen whether the FA analysis so understood can shed light on more value concepts than those that wear their emotional origins on their sleeves. We will offer some reasons for optimism on that score in the conclusion. But, before that, we want to say a few words about the notion of fittingness that has emerged from our discussion.

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21 Could the aetiological account just given be reclaimed by the perceptualist as an account of emotional content? The resulting view has it that emotions represent similarities between the situation currently faced and past situations. There are two reasons to doubt that the aetiological account can be reclaimed in this way. First, recall that we discuss the conceptual FA, which means that emotional content must be available from the first-person perspective. In this context, a similarity-based content is simply too complex for the resulting view to be plausible. Second, the credentials of the similarity-based content view as a perceptual account of the emotions are dubious. In particular, it is difficult to see how the mere representation of a similarity between situations can qualify as the representation of a given thick value. Note that the attitudinalist view does not have this problem because it anchors the understanding of value in a set of phenomenologically rich attitudinal responses elicited by constellations of natural properties and similarity relations. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for having raised this issue.

22 One may wonder as to the metaphysical consequences of our version of the conceptual FA. If thick value concepts are concepts of emotions that respond to the relevant constellations of natural properties, and these constellations are instances of the relevant thick values, doesn't this suggest that values are somehow *metaphysically prior* to fitting emotions? Although this issue is well beyond the scope of this paper, it seems to us that a positive answer may follow only if we make additional claims. Suppose for instance that one accepts that there are extremely disjunctive properties. If there are, why not identify the property of offence, say, with a (perhaps infinite) disjunction of constellations of natural properties, which would be prior to fitting emotions? Whereas this combination of conceptual and metaphysical views is compatible with what we have said, there are no reasons to think that advocates of the metaphysical FA will be attracted by this picture of properties.

#### 4. Which Fittingness for Emotions?

We have laid out a fairly detailed picture of the emotional attitudes that must be recruited by the FA analysis. By contrast, we have said surprisingly little about the notion of fittingness for these attitudes. Indeed, one may worry that the resulting notion of fittingness is not the *epistemic* notion that we have singled out from the outset.<sup>23</sup> We have elucidated the notion of fittingness by appealing to the agential component of emotions, and one might ask whether there is really something epistemically — as opposed to prudentially or morally — fitting about the kind of action tendency that is associated with a given emotion. For example, we said that understanding offensiveness is understanding what merits a certain type of hostility. Why is hostility and not “turning the other cheek” the epistemically fitting response (Smith, 2014)?

It is at this juncture that we can take the full measure of the gain that there is in an attitude-based (the relation to value comes from the psychological attitude) — as opposed to a content-based (the value is represented in the content) — approach to the relation between emotions and values. The worry seems indeed to rest on the assumption that the notion of epistemic fittingness only makes sense for attitudes that, like perception, present reality in a neutral or disengaged fashion. We hope that our discussion of representational theories has helped debunk this assumption. Indeed, one way of summarizing the lesson that we can draw from our discussion is the following: if the model of representation is suitable for certain domains, such as the domain of colours, these are precisely the domains in which the notion of merit does not apply.<sup>24</sup> That the concept of blue is a very different kind of concept from the concept of offence, say, is shown in the fact that we would not say of an experience of blue that it is a merited response to a surface’s blueness (D’Arms, 2005). The specificity of value concepts resides in their reference to a fitting form of engagement.

On the present way of developing the FA analysis, the nature of the response governs the standard that applies to it. This is our groundedness constraint; thus, we have to accept that the epistemic fittingness of emotions is shaped by a type of engagement. What is epistemically fitting to the offensive is a form of hostile

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23 The discussion that follows relates to “the wrong kind of reasons problem” (Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2004) or, more to the point in the present context, to the “conflation problem” (D’Arms and Jacobson, 2000). Ultimately, the question is whether the FA analysis is able to account for the different ways in which an emotion may fit an object, and in particular to single out what D’Arms and Jacobson famously call *epistemic* fittingness, in contrast to the *prudential* or *moral* ways an emotion may be appropriate.

24 McDowell (1985) famously underscores this distinction between colour concepts and evaluative concepts.

engagement; what is epistemically fitting to the shameful is a form of exposure avoidance, etc. “Turning the other cheek,” then, cannot be understood in the present framework as what is epistemically fitting to the offensive. What, then, of the intuition that, sometimes, the fitting attitude is not hostility but, say, appeasing the offender? Additional moral or prudential considerations at play in the circumstances may well demand that we “turn the other cheek.” This is to say that what is *pro tanto* fitting (hostility given the offence) may turn out *not* to be *pro toto* fitting (turning the other cheek may have better welfare consequences or help the offender grow morally). Emotions are tailored to specific evaluative aspects of the situation; this comes directly out of the groundedness constraint and never to its overall value.

Does this mean that prudential and moral considerations only become relevant when we assess the *pro toto* value of a situation? No. Fear and sadness are epistemically fitting if there is a danger and a loss: two *prudential* values. And it is *moral* failures that make it epistemically fitting to feel remorse. Thus, properties making it fitting to get angry are what constitute, in the circumstances, offences. Because offence is a prudential value (or, on other views, a moral value), these are prudential (or moral) considerations that make it epistemically fitting to react with anger. Thus, we should not lose sight of the fact that epistemic fittingness sometimes relates emotions to prudential or moral values.

Are we conflating here the epistemic, prudential, and moral? No. Epistemic fittingness is the fittingness that comes out of the groundedness constraint, which does not prejudge the sort of value to which a given emotion is fitting. Other normative considerations may of course bear on the occurrence of this emotion in given circumstances. But these considerations are *not governed by the nature of this emotion*; they arise from a normative standpoint that is external to it and to our understanding of the relevant thick value. If this is a bullet, we think it is one any advocate of the FA analysis should be happy to bite.

## 5. Conclusion

We have argued that we can deflect some of the major threats facing the conceptual FA analysis if we focus on thick value concepts, more particularly on those that are anchored in emotional responses. How important is this result? It is of course important in itself but would be even more so if the foregoing contained the seeds for developing a more encompassing understanding of the domain of value. The prospects may seem bleak, for we may think that in order to understand values that do not wear their affective origin on their sleeves (e.g., beautiful, courageous, fair, and of course good), we must appeal to attitudes whose nature does not give rise to

the relevant epistemic standards. Let us end our discussion by briefly sketching why this pessimism may be premature.

The general strategy is to show that, first impressions notwithstanding, our understanding of these values is anchored in our understanding of fitting emotions. The beautiful may be the simplest case because it would be surprising if our understanding of beauty was not grounded in our understanding of some forms of fitting admiration. Some aretaic concepts, such as the concept of courage, may be grounded in concepts of fitting emotional attitudes but in a different way. The concept of courage may be the concept of a capacity to overcome fitting fear. There is a venerable tradition according to which virtues and vices more generally are concerned with the successful or unsuccessful regulation of emotional attitudes. As to our understanding of fairness, it is reasonable to think that it is grounded in our understanding of a variety of emotion-related thick values (among them losses and benefits) and their distribution. Finally, those favourable to the kind of strategies just sketched will be tempted by the claim that the thin value concepts of the good and the bad are also grounded in our understanding of the thick values under discussion. They will insist that the understanding of the thin concepts of goodness or badness is grounded in the understanding of more specific ways of being good and bad. They might for example suggest that thin value concepts are determinable of thick value concepts (Harcourt and Thomas, 2013).

Of course, we have not sketched these strategies with the aim of convincing those who approach the axiological domain by focusing on thin value concepts. We will probably have lost them quite early on. Our aim has been more modest: to illustrate the potential scope of an FA analysis of thick affective concepts.

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