

Navigating Recalcitrant Emotions

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Recalcitrant emotions conflict with our considered judgments. Faced with the rollercoaster deemed entirely safe, one might fear it nevertheless. After a vivid dream, someone might feel angry with her partner and yet judge that her partner did nothing wrong.¹ Such pairs create a normative conflict—one *should not* both be afraid and judge that there is nothing dangerous, one *should not* be angry with one's partner while judging that the partner did nothing wrong. Such pairs are structurally inconsistent in the sense that they exert a kind of rational pressure on one another that is relieved when one of the attitudes is revised.² However, capturing this inconsistency has proven very difficult, and the various failures to capture it have guided much of the recent theorizing about the emotions. Cognitivism, for all its virtues, is believed to have been completely undermined by recalcitrant emotions, and the Perceptual theories that looked to take its place met with trouble not long after. Much of the nuance and in-fighting one finds in more recent Neo-Cognitivist theorizing revolves around making sense of the normativity of the emotions, and one gets the sense that the theorist who can account for cases of recalcitrance will have taken an important theoretical lead.

The present essay offers a new approach to recalcitrant emotions, an approach that can be accepted by a great many theorists. It is correct that some views fall prey to the challenges posed by recalcitrant emotions (and we will diagnose why that is), but one interesting upshot of the view to be offered is that it provides a simple way of accounting for the phenomena that has room for wide adoption. If correct, although recalcitrant emotions are an interesting phenomenon in their own right, their dialectical import is less than many theorists might think.

The fallen

¹ The often-cited preliminary account comes from Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, "The Significance of Recalcitrant Emotion (or, Anti-quasijudgmentalism)," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, LII (Jul. 21, 2003): 127–46, who hold that a recalcitrant emotion is one that persists "despite the agent's making a judgement that is in tension with it. A recalcitrant bout of fear, for example, is one where the agent is afraid of something despite believing that it poses little or no danger" (*ibid.*, p. 129).

² See John Broome, "Normative Requirements," *Ratio*, XXII, 4 (December 1999): 398–419; John Broome, "Wide or Narrow Scope?," *Mind*, CXVI, 462 (April 2007): 359–70; Daniel Fogal, "Rational Requirements and the Primacy of Pressure," *Mind*, fzz038, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzz038>; and Niko Kolodny, "The Myth of Practical Consistency," *European Journal of Philosophy*, XVI, 3 (December 2008): 366–402, for discussions of structural rationality focused on belief and on action. The present paper concerns the structural relationship between judgments and emotions.

Cognitivism was the first to fall.³ According to Cognitivists, at least part of what it is to be in an emotional state is to be in a state of belief or to make a judgment. For example, to fear the dog is (at least in part) to judge that it is dangerous. This view and nearby variants all face trouble when we consider a case of fearing the dog while judging or believing that it is not dangerous. In such a case, it looks as if the person in question is predicted both to judge the dog to be dangerous and to judge the dog not to be dangerous. While not a cognitive impossibility, the attribution of such a pair of judgments has struck theorists, for various reasons, as an implausible description of the person in question. By indicting our subject of making contradictory judgments, we either impute the wrong kind of normative failure,⁴ deem her deeply incoherent,⁵ or land ourselves in an outright contradiction as theorists.⁶ For most, there is more than reason enough to depart from Cognitivism.

But Cognitivism is elegant and powerful. The view posits a propositional content for the emotions and reduces the emotions to the familiar category of judgment. One can hence (i) make sense of the intentionality of the emotions in terms of the intentionality of judgments and (ii) make sense of the “fittingness” or “appropriateness” of the emotions in terms of the truth or falsity of their contents. This provides reason to salvage what one can, and Perceptualists about the emotions quickly saw that the problems posed by recalcitrant emotions can be avoided if one reduces emotion not to belief or judgment but rather to perception. After all, there is nothing normatively worrisome about perceiving things to be a way that differs from the way one judges them to be. There is no incoherence in *perceiving* the pencil to be not straight while judging that, despite appearances, it is straight.

However, recalcitrant emotions are left far from toothless and the perceptual theory, at least in its most basic form, has fallen as well. When one judges that the dog is harmless and yet fears it, one is doing something one *ought not* do. One *should not* be afraid of that which is simultaneously deemed harmless. A consistent person *owes* a change. Cases of recalcitrance give

³ See Robert C. Solomon, *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976); Jerome Neu, *A Tear Is an Intellectual Thing: The Meanings of Emotion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁴ As in Michael S. Brady, “The Irrationality of Recalcitrant Emotions,” *Philosophical Studies*, CXLV, 3 (2009): 413–30. Sabine A. Döring, “What’s Wrong with Recalcitrant Emotions? From Irrationality to Challenge of Agential Identity,” *Dialectica*, LXIX, 3 (September 2015): 381–402; Patricia S. Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons: An Inquiry into Emotional Justification* (New York: Routledge, 1988); Patricia S. Greenspan, “Emotions as Evaluations,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, LXII, 2 (April 1981): 158–69; Robert C. Roberts, “What an Emotion Is: A Sketch,” *The Philosophical Review*, XCVII, 2 (April 1988): 183–209.

⁵ As in Bennett W. Helm, “Emotions and Recalcitrance: Reevaluating the Perceptual Model,” *Dialectica*, LXIX, 3 (September 2015): 417–33; Bennett W. Helm, “Cognitivist Theories of Emotions,” in Andrea Scarantino, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Emotion Theory* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, forthcoming): https://drive.google.com/file/d/16tQyJ7bvdMH9qfGeZoSvm7mj2_vm2Flk/view

⁶ Alex Grzankowski, “The Real Trouble with Recalcitrant Emotions,” *Erkenntnis*, LXXXII, 3 (2017): 641–51.

rise to a structural tension that calls out for resolution, and a good theory should not dissolve this data point. But Perceptualists seem to do exactly that. They are correct: there need be nothing wrong with perceiving things to be one way while judging them to be otherwise. But something is *supposed to be* wrong in cases of recalcitrance. So, Perceptualism falls but one step ahead of Cognitivism.⁷

The failures of Cognitivism and Perceptualism provide guidance, and Neo-Cognitivism of a more nuanced form seeks to follow it.⁸ One must not understand emotions in such a way as to land in incoherence or contradiction, but one must also find room for the sense in which cases of recalcitrance present inconsistency. Theorists about the emotions must find “conflict without contradiction,”⁹ and this looks to be no easy task. In what follows, I offer a new way of navigating this difficult landscape.

⁷ For arguments to this effect see Brady, “The Irrationality of Recalcitrant Emotions,” *op. cit.*; Helm, “Emotions and Recalcitrance,” *op. cit.*; and Bennett W. Helm, *Emotional Reason: Deliberation, Motivation, and the Nature of Value* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁸ Perceptual theories of the emotions are sometimes classified as Neo-Cognitivist. I do not have any serious issue with this labeling, but given dialectical purposes, it will be helpful to keep track of the difference between Perceptual theorists who *identify* emotions with perceptions and those, whom I will call Neo-Cognitivists, who wish to find a middle view between classical Cognitivism/Judgmentalism and Perceptualism (perhaps by drawing analogies rather than an identity with perception). It is not always easy to place theorists into these compartments, but it seems fair to me to hold that the following are Neo-Cognitivists: Michael S. Brady, “Recalcitrant Emotions and Visual Illusions,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, XLIV, 3 (July 2007): 273–84; Brady, “The Irrationality of Recalcitrant Emotions,” *op. cit.*; Julien A. Deonna, “Emotion, Perception and Perspective,” *Dialectica*, LX, 1 (March 2006): 29–46; Julien A. Deonna and Fabrice Teroni, “Emotions as Attitudes,” *Dialectica*, LXIX, 3 (September 2015): 293–311; Peter Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons*, *op. cit.*; Helm, *Emotional Reason*, *op. cit.*; Roberts, “What An Emotion Is,” *op. cit.*; and Robert Campbell Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Theorists such as Sabine A. Döring, “The Logic of Emotional Experience: Noninferentiality and the Problem of Conflict without Contradiction,” *Emotion Review*, 1, 3 (2009): 240–47; Christine Tappolet, “Emotions, Perceptions, and Emotional Illusions,” in Clotilde Calabi, ed., *Perceptual Illusions: Philosophical and Psychological Essays* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 205–22; and Michael Tye, “The Experience of Emotion: An Intentionalist Theory,” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, CCXLIII, 1 (2008): 25–50, inhabit the Perceptualist camp. I would include here also those who hold Neo-Jamesian accounts according to which emotions are perceptions of bodily changes, such as Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Putnam, 1994); and Jesse J. Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Part of my hope in the present paper is to provide a way of thinking about the challenge posed by recalcitrant emotions that many theorists can utilize. As we will see below, there is a good reason that identifying emotions with perceptions will land one in trouble.

⁹ The phrase seems to originate in Sabine A. Döring, “Conflict without Contradiction,” in Georg Brun, ed., *Epistemology and Emotions* (London: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 83–104, though the challenge can also be found in Helm, *Emotional Reason*, *op. cit.*; and Helm, “Emotions and Recalcitrance,” *op. cit.*, who characterizes the challenge as one of accounting for “irrationality without incoherence.” See Hagit Benbaji, “How Is Recalcitrant Emotion Possible?,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, XCI, 3 (2013): 577–99.

What's recalcitrance got to do with it?

A point of clarification is in order before proceeding. Although “recalcitrant” emotions make for compelling cases, it is worth highlighting that the problem with which we are centrally concerned does not turn on recalcitrance as such. The problem is even more widespread than is typically noticed.

Recalcitrant emotions are so called because, despite our efforts, they simply will not go away. Suppose a person dreams that his partner has been nasty and in a foul mood and then finds that he feels angry with his partner in the morning. He sees that his anger *ought* to go away. But sometimes, even in the face of incoming information (in this case, the information that it was all a dream), an emotion does not seem to dissipate. Now, the recalcitrance as such *is* a problem for Cognitivism. If Cognitivists were right that our emotions are judgments or beliefs, we should expect cases of recalcitrance to be relatively rare. When new information comes in, we easily make new judgments and update our beliefs. Granted, this is not always the case, as with deeply held beliefs that are tied up with our identities or other deep commitments, but, typically, our beliefs and judgments are sensitive to new information. (I doubt many of us have tied to our identities or our deep commitments views about, for example, the safety of a glass bridge over a rocky canyon.) So, the fact that cases of recalcitrance are common and perhaps even frequent places yet another point of pressure on Cognitivism (that is, a point in addition to worries about incoherence or contradiction noted above). But it should be pointed out that once we turn to the problem facing Perceptualists and Neo-Cognitivists, recalcitrance as such is not the central issue.

Suppose that one turns a corner and sees a large, brightly colored snake slithering by. One feels immediate fear and is taken aback. But being knowledgeable in the relevant ways and having created some distance between oneself and the snake, one notices that the pattern is that of a harmless snake that mimics venomous snakes. In light of one's judgment, one should not be afraid—and indeed, let us suppose, one calms down and carries on. A case like this one is not a case of recalcitrance since the emotion easily yields. But even a case like this presents trouble for Perceptualists who are in no position to agree that one has done *as she should* in the face of the snake she judges to be harmless. The Perceptualist view provides no normative tension between judgments and emotions, and so, even when the cases of conflict are non-recalcitrant, they still pose a problem for the view. Whether recalcitrant or compliant, there are emotion/judgment pairs that give rise to rational pressure, even if only for a moment, and this fact needs explaining just as much as the familiar cases in the literature. Neo-Cognitivists should also take heed. If a theorist was hoping to offer a solution to the puzzle that makes use of the *recalcitrant* nature of the standard examples, that theorist must keep in mind that this tactic will be partial at best. Even in the humdrum cases where our emotions cooperate with our judgments, the normative rears its head and must be accounted for.

Because the terminology of “recalcitrant emotions” is so entrenched in the literature and because the recalcitrant cases are often vivid and compelling, I will continue to talk in terms of them and to rely on examples where one fails to bring judgments and emotions into alignment. Provided that the view ultimately offered concerning the normative pressure can be extended to non-recalcitrant cases, there should be no harm in this simplification.

Before moving on, let me also briefly mention the role of the *feeling* of conflict in cases of recalcitrance.

The focus of the present essay, as noted at the outset, is “structural rationality.” Examples of structural demands on rationality are familiar: provided that one believes that mass is distinct from weight, it would be irrational to also believe that it is not the case that mass is distinct from weight; or provided that one intends to attend a certain lecture and that one believes that the means to achieving that end is to walk to the other side of campus, it would be irrational to fail to intend to walk to the other side of campus. Much like these demands, there are demands that seem to hold between certain emotions and beliefs or judgments. It is worth noting that although there are of course interesting questions about how things *seem* to one when one is aware of such inconsistencies (and sometimes we are indeed aware that we are being inconsistent), the normative pressure we are seeking to capture need not be something felt or noticed, or something of which one is aware. Believing with conviction that the spider is entirely harmless but cowering the moment I lay my eyes on it might indeed cause me to be frustrated with myself and to feel myself being pulled in two directions, but it need not do so. We must remember that we are sometimes blameworthy (and praiseworthy) even though we do not ourselves appreciate this fact.¹⁰

What cognitivism seems to get right

Cognitivists are wedded to reducing the emotions (at least in part) to judgments or beliefs. Perceptualists are wedded to reducing the emotions (at least in part) to perceptions. Neo-Cognitivists have more flexibility. As I am understanding the view, Neo-Cognitivism is a representationalist theory of the emotions that aims to elucidate their nature but not necessarily by reducing the emotions to some other attitude or state. The further details of the theory are wide open. For instance, one might hold that although anger and fear are not to be reduced to some other categories such as judgment or perception, there is much to be gained from taking them to have propositional content, since propositional content can help make sense of their aboutness and their evaluability for fittingness or appropriateness. As an illustration, one might hold that to fear something is to represent that the thing is dangerous. Building the illustration out a bit more, one might hold that fear is a functional state isolated by its typical causes and effects and for one to fear something is for there to be a token representation to the effect that something is dangerous playing the right kind of role in one’s mental economy. This would be one way of utilizing familiar resources from functionalist theories of intentional states, and it

¹⁰ Approaches to our puzzle that turn on *felt* conflict run the risk of missing cases when one doesn’t feel any internal conflict even though one has made a mistake. Take, for example, Roberts’ (*Emotion, op. cit.*) proposal: “Why is the knowing phobic’s state of mind irrational, but not that of the knowing subject of an optical illusion? I say it is because the knowing phobic feels torn between his judgment and his emotions in a way that the knowing stick-viewer does not feel torn between his judgment and his visual experience” (p. 92). Although this difference may indeed be present and interesting, it doesn’t appear to capture the following facts that are potentially independent of how things seem to one: there are structural demands on rationality that hold between certain emotion/judgement pairs that do not hold between perception/judgement pairs.

would not demand taking an emotion such as fear to be, upon philosophical reflection, a special sort of perception, belief, judgment, or whatever. But if a Neo-Cognitivist theory is to avoid a charge of *ad hoc-ery*, some account of why emotions sometimes conflict with judgments is still needed. When it comes to our puzzle—the puzzle of accounting for the normative strain between emotions and judgments—it would be decidedly *unilluminating* to simply hold that it is in the nature of emotions to find conflict with certain judgments. Certainly, more should be said, and Neo-Cognitivists have indeed aimed to say more. In fact, part of what differentiates subtle variations among Neo-Cognitivists is the story they tell at this juncture. In the present section, I want to draw out a lesson one might reasonably take from Cognitivism in order to get an important style of approach to our puzzle on the table.

Cognitivism gets into trouble with recalcitrant emotions but at least their view, unlike the view of their Perceptualist competitors, predicts *some* rational conflict. Cognitivists are able to utilize a *logical* conflict in explaining the normative conflict that arises in cases of recalcitrance. Suppose one fears the dog (and so, according to Cognitivism, judges it to be dangerous) and judges the very same dog not to be dangerous. When the contents *p* and not-*p* are both the contents of a single subject's present judgments, *the logical conflict between those contents constitutes a rational conflict*. And now this fact can explain why one ought not be in the pair of fear and judgment together. In particular, one can now appeal to something like the “Consistency Principle” that says that rationality requires of one (whoever one is) that one does not judge contradictions.¹¹ In contrast, when one desires that *p* and also judges that not-*p*, or when one perceives that *p* and also judges that not-*p*, no such rationality violation arises. Attitudes such as desire and perception do not “mix” with judgment in the same way that other judgments do. In Schroeder's terminology, pairs of judgments are “inconsistency transmitting.”¹²

With these points in mind, here is perhaps a helpful way of looking again at the puzzle of recalcitrance: if we want to capture the normative data point that those suffering from cases of recalcitrance are doing something they should not be doing, we must understand their content-bearing *attitudes* to be ones that yield normative pressure when their contents contradict one another. But when we do so, we run the risk of indicting subjects of the wrong normative failure, or too big a failure, or a failure that makes no sense; so we had better tread lightly. A puzzle arises because Cognitivists land themselves on one end of a spectrum—“too much” conflict—and Perceptualists on the other—no conflict at all. There seems to be no obvious room to maneuver. An attitude short of judgment does not seem to give rise to *any* conflict, but judgment and its ilk (belief, endorsement, assertion, and so on) immediately land us in the realm of the

¹¹ See Broome, “Normative Requirements,” *op. cit.*; and Broome, “Wide or Narrow Scope?,” *op. cit.*, for further discussion of such principles. Although there is a great deal that is up for debate surrounding such principles (for example, if they are normatively fundamental or something to be explained), it is widely agreed that the Consistency Principle or something close to it is correct. See Raamy Majeed, “What Not to Make of Recalcitrant Emotions,” *Erkenntnis* (forthcoming), for a discussion of principles of rationality as applied to emotions, and Döring, “What's Wrong with Recalcitrant Emotions?,” *op. cit.*, for reasons for thinking that cases of recalcitrance are not, contra Cognitivism, cases where the Consistency Principle is violated.

¹² See Mark Schroeder, *Being For: Evaluating the Semantic Program of Expressivism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 43, for a discussion of “inconsistency transmitting” attitudes.

“wrong kind” or “too much.” As noted at the outset, there is disagreement about exactly why Cognitivists have made the wrong prediction. Is it, as argued by Helm,¹³ that we would incorrectly hold a subject to be uninterpretable and “mind boggling”? Or is it, as Döring¹⁴ argues, that we would incorrectly hold a subject to be in violation of the Consistency Principle? Or is it something else? In any event, there is wide agreement that if we understand our subjects in cases of recalcitrance as making logically contradictory judgments, we will misdescribe the cases. This spectrum of “too much” and “not enough” suggests that what is needed is an especially nuanced understanding of the nature of the emotions *qua attitudes* that provides us with “conflict without contradiction.”

This is precisely the sort of approach taken by the Neo-Cognitivist Bennet Helm.¹⁵ According to Helm, if we are to have any hope of making sense of the conflict arising in cases of recalcitrance, the emotions must be a kind of *assent*. Helm is guided by the *Cognitivist template* as I will call it. The Cognitivist template goes like this: the normative conflict between judgment and emotion is to be accounted for in terms of the logical conflict between the contents of the judgment and the emotion. It is Helm’s view that if we give up on the idea of *assent* when trying to understand the emotions, we will inevitably be left with no conflict at all. When one has assenting attitudes to the effect that *p* and to the effect that not-*p*, one thereby violates a norm of consistency. But of course, for reasons given above, the assent in the emotions somehow has to be “less than” that found in judgment.

Across a number of works,¹⁶ Helm has developed a story about “passive assent.” On his view, because emotions are tied to each other and are tied to values in a way that makes them committal, they are assents. A simple example brings out the idea. If a person fears the growling dog, there are various other attitudes she ought to also take toward the dog: she should be relieved when the dog goes away, she should believe that the dog might cause harm, she should want to not be harmed, and so on. This pattern of attitudes constitutes a stance of valuing: the subject values her safety. Accord to Helm, being afraid of the dog *commits* one to an array of other attitudes. So emotions, being a kind of assent, do conflict with judgments in a way not dissimilar to the way judgments conflict with judgments (though the conflict is passive and so, in some way, a bit less).

This very brief outline of Helm’s view does not do it complete justice, but given my interests I wish to put Helm’s approach aside. Benbaji¹⁷ and Brady¹⁸ have both offered compelling criticism and, for my own part, there seem to be no good examples of “partial,”

¹³ Helm, *Emotional Reason*, *op. cit.*; and Helm, “Emotions and Recalcitrance,” *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Döring, “Conflict without Contradiction,” *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Helm, *Emotional Reason*, *op. cit.*; and Helm, “Emotions and Recalcitrance,” *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Helm, *Emotional Reason*, *op. cit.*; Helm, “Emotions and Recalcitrance,” *op. cit.*; and Helm, “Cognitivist Theories of Emotions,” *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Benbaji, “How Is Recalcitrant Emotion Possible?,” *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Brady, “The Irrationality of Recalcitrant Emotions,” *op. cit.*

“passive,” or “quasi” assent attitudes that yield conflict without contradiction. Attitudes such as belief, judgment, assertion, and so on conflict with judgments, but not in the way we need. Too much! Attitudes such as perception, desire, hope, supposition, and so on create no conflict of the sort we are after. Not enough! Helm has identified what at first looks like a promising strategy—find that Goldilocks attitude that is just assent-ish enough to *transmit* the logical inconsistency in content. But it would go a long way if we had any other example at all of a familiar attitude that we have an independent grip on that conflicts with judgment in just this way.

There is a second style of approach that will also be informative to have on the table. The approach I have in mind comes in different forms, but a common feature is the idea that we should not seek a “lightweight” version of the Cognitivist’s conflict as Helm does. Rather, we should look for a different type of conflict altogether, a practical conflict. In other words, this style of approach departs from the spectrum by giving up on the logical conflict in content and instead aims to find some other notion of conflict that makes sense of cases of recalcitrance. For instance, Brady¹⁹ argues that when one judges that the dog is not dangerous but fears the dog nevertheless, one’s fear primes one to act in a way that goes against one’s best judgment, where this is a waste of resources.²⁰

Getting some distance from the spectrum and that hunt for the just-right-attitude is a good idea, but unfortunately views of the sort Brady offers do not seem to capture the conflict we are after. First, it seems possible to be primed to act in a way that is not in accord with our judgments and yet not to reach our tension—when the Müller-Lyer lines *look* to me to be different in length, I am *primed* to believe or judge they are different in length.²¹ Again, given present interests I want to put this style of approach to the side. Trying to capture cases of recalcitrance in terms of a practical conflict simply seems to miss the target.²² In a case of recalcitrant emotion, the failure is not merely that one is being impractical but is instead that one is, in some sense, inconsistent.

We have landed in a difficult position. If we adopt a representationalist account of the emotions, we have a logical conflict in content and no good way to use it: On the one hand, if we work toward an attitude of assent, we seem to land back in the troubles of Cognitivism; on the other, if we do not work toward assent, we simply come up short. Once this is appreciated, we

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Brady, *Emotional Insight*, *op. cit.*, pp. 162–63, develops the line just slightly differently, noting that besides wasting resources, being driven to check questions one has settled in judgment can lead to “epistemological and practical paralysis.” I fail to see why that issue is not simply a practical problem. Roberts, *Emotion*, *op. cit.*, offers a related view according to which emotions sometimes motivate one to act in a way that one believes one ought not act. Brady, “The Irrationality of Recalcitrant Emotions,” *op. cit.*, offers a compelling case against Roberts and aims to offer an improvement. See Helm, “Emotions and Recalcitrance,” *op. cit.*, for criticism of both Brady and Roberts.

²¹ See Price, *Emotion*, *op. cit.*, chapter 7, for further criticisms of Brady’s account

²² See Döring, “The Logic of Emotional Experience,” *op. cit.*, for an attempt to offer an error theory. Döring’s take on the puzzle bears certain similarities to Brady’s, but on her view there is no irrationality to account for. I am far less inclined to give up the *prima facie* data point that there really is rational conflict in cases of recalcitrance, especially since I think there is a way to account for the appearances without positing error.

start to reach for some conflict that does not rely on the logical conflict in content, such as a conflict in motivation or a waste of resources. But this appears to change the subject. It is my view that an alternative approach is needed and in fact has been right under our noses.

What cognitivism really got right

There is a constellation of considerations against Cognitivism. As we have seen, the view predicts that in cases of recalcitrance, a subject makes contradictory judgments. Spell out the details as one likes, but this does not seem to be the correct description of the cases.²³

Nonetheless, there is a kernel of truth to be found in Cognitivism that I think has gone unnoticed, and which can be stripped away from the problematic commitments that land Cognitivists in trouble.

When one judges that p and judges that not- p , one does something worthy of criticism. As noted above, one violates the principle of rationality that requires of one (whoever one is) that one not judge contradictions. But there is more to observe about such cases. Notice that in cases of contradictory judgment, there is a *guarantee* that one will violate the norm governing judgment. Judgments are governed by the truth norm: if one's judgment is true, then one's judgment meets the norm; if one's judgment is false, it violates that norm. Contradictory judgments are such that one is bound to be making at least one norm-violating judgment. To make a pair of judgments with contradictory contents is a surefire way to violate the truth norm, and that is a problem.²⁴ My suggestion is that we focus on this structure—the *guarantee* that one will violate a norm—and isolate it from the other troublesome commitments of Cognitivism. I think there is a good idea that can be reworked and reshaped so as to have broad application.

Above, I noted that one approach to our puzzle is to look to a “Cognitivist template” for guidance in providing an account of the normative failure in cases of recalcitrance. Earlier, that template looked like this: use the contradictory contents between a pair of attitudes to make sense of our structural, normative failure. That is, tell a story about how and when *logical* conflict gives rise to the conflict we are aiming to capture. My suggestion currently is that there is a different idea to be drawn out of Cognitivism, namely that some pairs of attitudes are

²³ Of course, there are other well-known reasons not connected to recalcitrance that might lead one to give up Cognitivism: for example, that it is too cognitively demanding and would predict that animals and children lack many emotions they seem to have. I do not wish to take a stand on worries of this sort in the present paper.

²⁴ For present purposes, I am not suggesting that the Consistency Principle can be explained in terms of the guarantee to flout the truth norm. Whether the Consistency Principle can be reduced to other normative notions is a contested matter (Broome, “Wide or Narrow Scope?,” *op. cit.*). What is important here is that we focus our attention not on the Consistency Principle as such but on the relationship between the norms that govern our two judgments, namely that one is bound to flout one of them.

structured in such a way that, necessarily, one will violate a norm by being in that pair of attitudes. As we will see shortly, this account need not appeal to logical conflict in content.²⁵

Emotions are governed by norms of fit or appropriateness.²⁶ Sometimes this is expressed as a fact about the “formal objects” of the emotions. Fear’s formal object is dangerousness, anger’s formal object is offensiveness, and so on.²⁷ The present essay is not the place for a defense of *why* it is that emotions have the formal objects they have (and maybe there is no further story).²⁸ At present, it is enough to appreciate that everyone in the debate is prepared to agree that emotions can be appropriate or inappropriate, fitting or unfitting, depending on the properties of the thing upon which one’s emotion is directed. Everyone agrees that fearing that

²⁵ To be clear, I am not advocating a return to Cognitivism, for according to Cognitivists, one is guaranteed to violate a norm *by virtue of judging contradictorily*, and this is not the right description of our cases. But I do think that there is an aspect of the Cognitivists’ story that can provide us with something we can make use of.

²⁶ I do not currently wish to commit to a “fitting attitude” theory of value according to which, roughly, something possesses a value properly only if it is appropriate or fitting to value it. That is a distinct and further claim from the claim that emotions are appropriate or inappropriate in various situations. For further discussion, see Justin D’Arms and Daniel Jacobson, “The Moralistic Fallacy: On the ‘Appropriateness’ of Emotions,” *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research*, LXI, 1 (July 2000): 65–90; Justin D’Arms and Daniel Jacobson, “Sentiment and Value,” *Ethics*, CX, 4 (July 2000): 722–48; Daniel Jacobson, “Fitting Attitude Theories of Value,” in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2011): <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/fitting-attitude-theories/>; Mark Johnston, “The Authority of Affect,” *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research*, LXIII, 1 (July 2001): 181–214; and Glen Pettigrove, “Fitting Attitudes and Forgiveness,” in Michael McKenna, Dana Nelkin, and Brandon Warmke, eds., *Forgiveness: New Philosophical Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). But there is an important point on which I agree with fitting-attitude theorists and which I take to be widely agreed upon more generally: emotions are assessable for fit or appropriateness. For example, one ought not be angry with someone who has done nothing wrong, and one ought to be afraid of that which is dangerous. Dangerous things are *fitting objects* of fear, and those who have wronged one are *fitting objects* of one’s anger. The fittingness of an emotion contributes to the normative question of whether or not someone should feel that attitude at a particular time. (Though other normative considerations may also be at issue, and so fit might not, by itself, settle the broader normative question of whether or not someone should, all things considered, feel some emotion at a particular time. See Glen Pettigrove, “Attitudes and Practices,” *Australasian Philosophical Review*, III (2019), for more on this point.)

²⁷ For further discussion of formal objects, see Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion, and Will* (London: Routledge, 1963); J. R. S. Wilson, *Emotion and Object* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972); and Fabrice Teroni, “Emotions and Formal Objects,” *Dialectica*, LXI, 3 (September 2007): 395–415. I agree with Teroni that the formal objects do not individuate emotion types. In my view, functional roles are a better candidate for that job. The formal object of an attitude tells us which property must be instantiated by the intentional object of the attitude in order for the attitude to be appropriate or fitting, and it is possible that distinct attitude types might have the same formal object.

²⁸ For recent discussions of fittingness and the possibility that fit might be a primitive in our normative theorizing, see Conor McHugh and Jonathan Way, “Fittingness First,” *Ethics*, CXXVI, 3 (2016): 575–606; and Richard Yetter Chappell, “Fittingness: The Sole Normative Primitive,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, LXII, 249 (October 2012): 684–704. For an overview of fittingness see Christopher Howard, “Fittingness,” *Philosophy Compass*, XIII, 11 (November 2018): 125–42.

which is not dangerous is unfitting or inappropriate and so one, in some sense, ought not fear such things.

Formal objects provide a needed friction point. Notice that some judgments *do not* conflict with our emotions. The kind of conflict present in cases of recalcitrance does not arise in pairs like these:

- (A) Fearing the dog.
- (B) Judging that the dog has not wronged one.

- (A) Feeling angry with one's partner.
- (B) Judging that one's partner is a kind person.

The B-judgments might feature in a story that helps provide *reasons why* (perhaps in a practical sense) one should not (or should) be afraid or should not (or should) be angry, but these pairs *all on their own* do not give rise to the inconsistency found in cases of recalcitrance. In contrast, the following pairs *do* give rise to our conflict:

- (A) Fearing the dog.
- (C) Judging that the dog is not dangerous.

- (A) Being angry with one's partner.
- (C) Judging that one's partner has not wronged one.

It should be striking that the C-judgments predicate the very properties that are uncontroversially taken to be the formal objects of the A-emotions. It is a judgment about *dangerousness* that interfaces in the conflicting way with fear, for example. Because of what is predicated in the C-judgments, there is "friction" between the C-judgments and the formal objects governing the A-emotions. It is this point of contact that gives rise to (and ultimately allows us to explain) the structural conflict present in cases of recalcitrance.

If one fears a dog and judges that dog not to be dangerous, then one's fear is appropriate or fitting just in case one's judgment is inappropriate or unfitting. And the reverse is true as well. If one's judgment is true and so fitting, then one's fear will be unfitting because the true judgment that the dog is not dangerous entails that the object is in fact not dangerous. The normative correctness of the judgment turns on whether the dog is dangerous, because it predicates dangerousness of the dog. The normative correctness of the fear turns on whether the dog is dangerous, because (for whatever further reason we might wish to give, if any) dangerousness is the formal object of fear. We need not somehow turn a logical contradiction into an instance of normative failing by embedding it in just the right Goldilocks attitude. *The failing is that,*

*necessarily, one violates a norm when fearing that which is judged not to be dangerous.*²⁹ This structure can be generalized. Let us introduce the term *property analog* for ease of exposition. Being true is the property analog of the norm of truth. Being dangerous is the property analog of the danger norm. It is easy enough to see how to extend that idea to other formal objects. We can now generalize as follows (my own preference is to put things in terms of the “fittingness” of the attitudes and so I call the pairs of attitudes in question “misfits” and capture the structural conflict in “Misfit”):

Misfit: If one is in an emotional state/undergoing an emotion that is about *o* and the emotion is governed by norm *N*, and if one simultaneously predicates the negation of the property analog of *N* to *o* in judgment or belief, then, necessarily, one will violate a norm.

It is worth looking at one more case to clarify. Suppose I am angry with someone who I judge has not wronged me in any way. It is fitting to be angry with someone who has wronged you, and it is unfitting to be angry with someone who has not. The property analog of the norm governing anger is the property of having wronged one. If I am angry with you and I simultaneously judge that you have not wronged me, I am guaranteed to fail normatively. If in actuality you have wronged me, my judgment is false and so a violation of the truth norm. If in actuality you have not wronged me, my anger violates its norm. In any possibly situation, I violate a norm, and it is this modal fact that captures the inconsistency present in cases of recalcitrance.

Further clarification, wide application, and dialectical irrelevance

Misfit should be appealing to many theorists, but it is also dialectically powerful. Cognitivists, for example, can take no issue with Misfit since their view *predicts* it. It is a dialectical virtue of the view on offer that it cannot simply be rejected by Cognitivists. To be clear, Cognitivism is not *assisted* by the truth of Misfit, nor does Misfit capture what Cognitivists say is wrong in cases of recalcitrance. Cognitivists are on the hook for the claim that when one is in a recalcitrant case, although Misfit is true of a subject, it is true (at least in part) *by virtue of* the fact that one is judging that *p* and judging that not-*p*. But the verdict that cases of recalcitrance are cases of contradiction in judgment is, as we know, independently problematic. Because Cognitivists make further, substantive commitments beyond what is found in Misfit, they get themselves into trouble. What Cognitivists must do is find a way to alleviate these additional pressures, and this

²⁹ Notice that, in effect, at least two things go wrong in these cases. First, there is the problem just mentioned: one is guaranteed to violate a norm. The judgment and the emotion are related in such a way that, necessarily, one will violate a norm. Second, there is the actual violation. If I both judge that the dog is not dangerous and fear the dog, if the dog is in fact dangerous, I have in fact judged falsely. (Or, reversing the case, if the dog really is *not* dangerous, then my judgment is correct but my fear is, as a matter of actual fact, unfitting.)

looks like no easy task. But of importance at the moment is simply that Cognitivists should take no issue with the truth of Misfit. How could they?³⁰

Misfit is much more helpful for Neo-Cognitivists of various stripes. In the remainder of this section, I will make the case that accounting for the normative conflict that arises in cases of recalcitrance in the way I have recommended is something many theorists can welcome into their theories. And for those who cannot, there is a clear explanation as to why (which will be addressed in the next section). Moreover, I wish to highlight that one *need not* have contradictory contents anywhere in their theory to tell the story provided by Misfit, and I think this is a good thing since leaning too much on contradictory contents tempts one toward the Goldilocks approach that does not work. One is *perfectly welcome* to retain the view that emotions have propositional contents and to hold that those contents can logically contradict the contents of our judgments; but when pairs of attitudes are not inconsistency-transmitting, this fact cannot be what explains the normative failing we are hoping to capture. So, in what follows I will discuss how a Neo-Cognitivist can utilize my approach, but I also want to drive home the point that it is not a contradiction in content that is at issue. I do this by considering a view according to which the emotions do not have propositional contents, and yet such a view can take Misfit on board.

Neo-Cognitivists are well positioned to take up my suggestion. They can and should adopt the proposal I have just offered, and that is true whether one spells their view out in terms of feelings of import, evaluative construals, perception-like representations of value, or whatever. It is common among Neo-Cognitivists that formal objects feature in the emotions by getting into their contents. The formal object of the emotion is *predicated* of the thing one's emotion is about, and this yields a propositional content of the emotion: to fear *o* is to represent *o* as dangerous (for example). As is familiar, on this view, one's fear is appropriate or fitting just in case things are as they are propositionally represented as being, that is, just in case the content is true. And all of this is perfectly in keeping with my suggestion that what goes wrong in cases of recalcitrance is that at least one attitude is bound to violate its norm. Now, as it happens, on the Neo-Cognitivist view, there is a logical conflict in content between the judgment and the emotion; but this fact is not pulling any weight fundamentally in the explanation of inconsistency. Even if we say that fear (for example) is a representational state with a propositional content that can be assessed for truth, notice that truth is not thereby the norm of fear. Rather, truth and falsity are being brought in by the Neo-Cognitivist to help explain how it is that emotions are norm-governed and when it is that emotions meet (or fail to meet) their norms of fit or appropriateness. Question: How is it that emotions can be fitting or unfitting? Answer: By representing things as having certain (perhaps evaluative) properties. Question: And when are they appropriate or fitting? Answer: When they represent accurately. The ability to give those answers are nice features of the view! But what I am suggesting on behalf of Neo-Cognitivists is that the *basic* fact that makes sense of the conflict in cases of recalcitrance is the modal fact I offered above: that necessarily one will flout a norm when one adopts the pair of attitudes. That the local facts about which emotions of ours violate norms might then be further explicated in terms of truth and falsity of content is an optional, theoretical add-on that tells us how it is, and when it is, that a given emotion interfaces with evaluative properties. But one cannot start with a story concerning logically conflicting

³⁰ Thank you to an anonymous referee for demanding clarity on this point.

contents and *then* derive the result that there is a structural inconsistency. Remember, if we focus too heavily on logical conflict in content, it is all but inevitable that we will find our way back to the Goldilocks predicament outlined earlier. This is not a good predicament to be in, since it leads one to the idea that it is a logical conflict that grounds the normative failure we are hoping to capture in cases of recalcitrance. But it is not. It only could be if emotions were governed by the truth norm, so that emotions and judgments could interface in an inconsistency-transmitting way.³¹ The good news is that without trying to force the emotions into a category that is a bit like judgment but not quite as committal, and a bit like perception but not as normatively toothless, Neo-Cognitivists can simply take Misfit on board. They can hold that in cases of recalcitrant emotions it is necessarily the case that one will flout a norm, and they can *then add* that the flouting attitude, be it the emotion or the judgment, will have a false content.

To drive home the point that a contradiction in content is not doing the work and also to show the wider applicability of Misfit, let us consider a view of the emotions that stays very close to appearances. Consider: “Pat fears Fido,” “Sam is angry at Sally,” “Sally is jealous of her sister.” One might be forgiven for entertaining the possibility that these ascriptions ascribe not propositional attitudes but rather “attitudes toward objects.”³² That is, one might hold that the ascribed states are intentional states that are about objects but that do not predicate anything of those objects. On a view like this one, to fear the dog (say) is to stand in an intentional relation simply to the dog and not in virtue of representing that the dog is thus and so. One who holds such a view is still perfectly able to take on board the data point that the emotions have formal objects, that they can be (in)appropriate or (un)fitting. On a view like this one, the formal objects of the emotions are not properties predicated of intentional objects; rather, they are “carried by” the attitudes themselves. Attitudes, according to this view, have properties such as being appropriate just in case the intentional object of the attitude has, say, the property of being dangerous.³³ But even without propositional content, we have all we need to generate and explain the conflict between emotion and judgment. Fear is fitting when the thing feared *is*

³¹ Recall that by going down this path, one incurs additional, unwanted problems such as the prediction that one violates the Consistency Principle and the prediction that a subject is incoherent.

³² See Julien A. Deonna and Fabrice Teroni, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2011), for a view that comes close to this suggestion. See Alex Grzankowski, “Attitudes Towards Objects,” *Noûs*, L, 2 (June 2016): 314–28, for a discussion of attitudes toward objects; and Alex Grzankowski and Michelle Montague, eds., *Non-Propositional Intentionality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), for a collection of essays on non-propositional intentionality.

³³ In fact, this might be an attractive way to think about other attitudes as well. Take belief, which is governed by the truth norm. One option is to hold that what it is to believe *that p* is to believe *that p is true*. On such a view, we might then say that belief meets its norm iff it correctly represents. But another option is to hold that the property of being true need not be represented but is, rather, something to do with the attitude of belief as such. One reason to prefer this option is that it avoids regress: If to believe *that p* is to believe *that p is true*, to believe *that p is true* must be to believe *that p is true* is true, and so on. For further discussion of this issue see Howard Sankey, “To Believe Is to Believe True,” *Principia: An International Journal of Epistemology*, XXIII, 1 (2019): 131–36; and Alex Grzankowski, “To Believe Is Not to Believe True: Reply to Sankey,” *Principia: An International Journal of Epistemology*, XXIII, 1 (2019): 137–38.

dangerous. Judgments to the effect that something is not dangerous are true when the thing *is not* dangerous. This pair is inconsistent and easily slots into the framework offered above in Misfit. There is no need to hold that the emotions have propositional contents to tell this story.

There are plenty of details to debate concerning the many alternative approaches to the emotions. There is however a modest, dialectical point worth making before closing this section. The solution offered in the present paper to the puzzle of how to make sense of “conflict without contradiction” raised by recalcitrant emotions does not rely on contradictory contents, and the view is widely applicable, which speaks in its favor. An upshot of this is that although recalcitrant emotions have guided a great deal of the theorizing about the emotions by raising serious problems for Cognitivists and Perceptualists, we should not expect the puzzle of recalcitrance to lead us all the way to a unique, correct view. The many Neo-Cognitivists and those attracted to the Attitudes Toward Objects view are all put on equal footing by Misfit when it comes to capturing the normative failure present in cases of recalcitrance.

Two explanatory benefits

Very briefly, I want to consider two further virtues of the position on offer. The first is that Misfit can easily be adapted to new cases outside of the emotions. Second, Misfit helps to diagnose why it is that Perceptualist theories of the emotions cannot overcome the puzzle of recalcitrance.

First, consider desire rather than emotion. A normative tension very much like the one that arises in cases of recalcitrant emotions arises in cases of desire. Let us suppose for a moment that desires are fitting just in case what is desired is desirable. And now suppose that one believes that tearing pages out of a first edition of *Crime and Punishment* and selling them one by one for great profit is *not* a desirable state of affairs. If one desires to tear out the pages one by one and sell them despite this belief, a tension arises. There is an important sense in which one with that desire and that belief is inconsistent. How can we explain this failing?

The view I offered above easily scoops up this example. If the desires are fitting just in case the thing desired is desirable, and if one’s belief predicates the negated property analog, one is thereby guaranteed to flout a norm. (Notice that if you hold that desire is governed by, say, the good, it is easy to see how to slot in your preference. Pick your favored view of the norm against which desires are measured for fit or appropriateness and then find a belief that predicates the relevant property analog, and you will have a case that fits with your preferred view.³⁴)

Turn now to the Perceptual theory of the emotions. I have in mind here, to reiterate from above, a view that says that the emotions are perceptions (not merely “perception-like” but *literally perceptions*). Perceptions are not governed by a norm in the way belief is governed by truth and desire is governed by the good or the desirable. When one goes to the optometrist and learns that one is farsighted, one has not learned that one’s perceptual system is unfitting or inappropriate. Rather, it is malfunctioning. The emotions, on the other hand, can be

³⁴ It is worth noting that if one hoped to offer a theory of the emotions according to which emotions are or are like desires, this application should come as good news. Even though desires have a different direction of fit from belief and judgment, it is still possible to generate conflict. The Goldilocks approach is blind to this possibility since it relies on types of attitude pairs that are inconsistency-transmitting. The belief/desire pair is not among the inconsistency-transmitting.

(in)appropriate or (un)fitting. This mismatch leads to trouble for Perceptualists.³⁵ As I noted above, the recipe for making sense of the normative tension in cases of recalcitrance utilizes the fact that there is a norm governing an emotion and there is a judgment that has something to say about the property analog of that norm.³⁶ If Misfit is correct, and if perceptions are not norm-governed in the relevant way, there is no hope for generating a structural conflict between judgment and emotion conceived of in terms of perception.³⁷

Conclusion

In cases of recalcitrance, one is guaranteed to violate a norm. That fact holds because emotions are norm-governed, and the judgments that conflict with them have something to say about the property analogs of those norms. The explanation of the conflict that arises in cases of recalcitrance that I have offered can be accepted by a wide array of theorists. This wide

³⁵ Tappolet aims to use malfunctioning as a component in an explanation of the normative failure in cases of recalcitrance. Her idea is that correct accusations of irrationality stem from the fact that our emotions are plastic, so that when one has a judgment to the effect that, say, the dog is not dangerous while fearing the dog, there is an indication that something might be wrong with the emotional system which one *ought* to take action to fix. See Christine Tappolet, *Emotions, Value, and Agency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 38. There are at least two reasons why this approach will not work. First, it does not seem to tell us anything about cases that run in the other order, where it is the belief rather than the emotion that it is at fault. If one's emotion is fitting while one falsely believes that the dog is not dangerous, it is not obviously the case that one should change the emotional system. A good explanation should have something to say about both kinds of cases. Second, on Tappolet's view, the force of the ought seems to come from the fact that emotions ought to be reliable and that there is something like an obligation to make them so. But cases of recalcitrance appear to be cases of inconsistency. We simply do not need to know about the reliability of emotion or of belief. The puzzle consists in making sense of the pairwise-inconsistency as such. There is nothing *inconsistent* in noticing that a system is not working properly but then doing nothing about it.

³⁶ If the foregoing arguments are correct, theories that utilize perception are at least able to capture the aboutness or directedness of the emotions even if they falter when it comes to the normative. It is worth noting that pure feeling theories of the emotions, long out of favor though historically important, look to be even worse off. To the extent that such views hold that emotions are not object-directed and not norm-governed, we can see why it is that such views are in no position to explain what is wrong in cases of recalcitrance. Thank you to an anonymous referee for pressing me to think more carefully about the shortcomings of feeling theories.

³⁷ One might disagree and hope to argue that perception *is* norm-governed in the relevant way. I do grant that perception is governed by practical norms. If one is hallucinating purple spots, one might correctly say, "You really shouldn't be seeing spots, I think you need a doctor." But at the optometrist's office, the doctor would not take one's inability to read the bottom line to be *inappropriate* in the way fearing something harmless is inappropriate. All of this suggests a strategy on behalf of the Perceptual theorist: show that perceptions really are governed by norms in the way that emotions are. My own position is that this is unlikely to pan out. See Susanna Siegel, *The Rationality of Perception* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), for considerations in favor of thinking that perceptual experiences themselves can be rational or irrational, though see Adam Pautz, "The Arationality of Perception: Comments on Siegel," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (forthcoming), <https://philpapers.org/archive/PAUTAO-14.pdf> for dissent.

applicability should make the view look attractive, but it also has dialectical import. In the present landscape, recalcitrant emotions often look like a litmus test for a theory of the emotions. And recalcitrant emotions do indeed make trouble for Cognitivism and for Perceptualism. But by adopting the strategy offered above, everyone else (or at least anyone who thinks emotions are norm-governed and have aboutness) can make sense of the inconsistency present in cases of recalcitrance. Something other than recalcitrant emotions will have to help us decide among those remaining alternatives.

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