EMOTION, ATTENTION, AND REASON

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Abstract

Our reasons for emotions such as sadness, anger, resentment, and guilt often remain long after we cease experiencing these emotions. This is puzzling. If the reasons for these emotions persist, why do the emotions not persist? Does this constitute a failure to properly respond to our reasons? In this paper we provide a solution to this puzzle. Our solution turns on the close connection between the rationality of emotion and the rationality of attention, together with the differing reasons to which attention and emotion are properly responsive.

1 INTRODUCTION

Intense sadness is appropriate in response to the loss of a loved one. However, the sadness of loss often fades quickly. Following the loss of a loved one, many people return to their emotional baselines after only a few months (Bonanno et al, 2005). This is puzzling. After all, the reasons for sadness don't disappear. The fact of the loved one's death becomes no less real as time passes. So, if the reason for sadness persists, why does sadness not persist? Reflecting on the diminishment of grief he experienced following his mother's death, Marušić (2018) puts the problem as follows:

> "..if my grief was a rational response to her death, and if her death remains the same over time, then, it seems, I am failing to be responsive to my reasons." Marušić, 2018, p1.

The puzzle is rendered stark by the discomfort we naturally feel at the prospect of not only losing a loved one, but of emotionally moving on from that loss. However, the puzzle is not restricted to the emotions we experience following bereavement. Where R is an undefeated reason to feel an emotion E, and as long as the relevant background conditions remain the same, the puzzle can be

generalized as follows (call this the 'puzzle of forever fitting emotions'):[1,2,3]

1. R doesn't cease to be a reason for E after a certain period of feeling E.

2. If one possesses an undefeated reason for E, then rationally one ought to E.

3. So, as long as one possesses R, then one rationally ought to E.

The puzzle is that while (1-2) are hard to deny, the conclusion (3) is hard to accept. Consider again bereavement-induced sadness. If (3) is correct, then our typical response to loss is deeply inappropriate. The grieving process typically resolves quickly, and we often act as if there is something pathological about sustained long-term grief, even though the grieving subject retains knowledge of her loss. Yet, according to (3) we ought to feel intense sadness (along with the other emotions characteristic of grief) indefinitely. Our failure to do so seems to constitute a failure to properly respond to our reasons. The worry is amplified when the puzzle is generalized to other emotions such as anger, resentment, and shame. We are left with a picture of our emotional lives as deeply disordered - almost entirely unresponsive to reason. This conclusion must be embraced only as a last resort.[4] Either (1) or (2) must be rejected.

We are uncomfortable with the wholesale rejection of (1). We believe that there are cases in which reasons for resentment remain forever in place (Améry (1999)) and cases in which a loss (of a child, for instance) never ceases to be a reason for sadness. Yet, even in these cases, the emotions in question typically fade as time passes. We don't believe that this manifests a failure of adequate reasons responsiveness. Thus, we don't believe that the puzzle can be adequately resolved by rejecting (1).[5]

This leaves (2). One way to reject (2) is to hold, as Howard (2023) does, that non-fit related reasons (so-called 'reasons of the wrong kind') can be normative for emotions. That is, practical factors such as the fact that one would be more productive if one's sadness ceased can outweigh the reasons one has for sadness so that sadness ceases to be warranted as time passes despite remaining fitting.[6] We are skeptical of the suggestion that reasons of the wrong kind can be normative for emotions. Furthermore, even granting that such reasons

[1]Examples of potential defeaters for grief would include e.g. the discovery that the loved one committed heinous acts during their life that render grief inappropriate.

[2]Excluding the fact that one has already been feeling E for a period of time (which, according to Na'aman (2021a), changes the background conditions). We find it natural to classify Na'man's view as an instance of rejecting (1), so we take 'all background conditions' to range over every condition other than having felt E for a certain period of time.

[3]The background conditions for anger can change when the perpetrator regrets and compensates the angry person. In the case of bereavement-induced sadness, they can change if one stops loving the deceased.

[4]Moller (2007) accepts a response along these lines for the case of grief. He does not discuss the generalization of the puzzle to other emotions.

[5]For rejections of (1) see Nussbaum (2001), Marušić (2018), and Na'aman (2021a).

[6]For discussions of the relation between warrant and fit (or equivalent distinctions) see D'Arms and Jacobson (2000) Yetter Chappell (2012), and Na'aman (2021b).

can be normative for emotions, we doubt that the rationality of emotion diminishment can be explained by appeal to the bearing of non-fit related reasons. This is because we doubt that emotional episodes, such as grief, are rationally responsive to practical factors.[7]

In this paper, we provide an alternative solution to the puzzle by providing an alternative way of rejecting (2). Our solution turns on the close connection between the rationality of emotion and the rationality of attention, together with the differing reasons to which attention and emotion are properly responsive. In essence, our approach drives a wedge between the fittingness of an emotional episode and its rationality. It does so without appealing to reasons of the wrong kind, and without demoting fittingness from its central role in the normative appraisal of emotions.

Our solution is neutral on (1). And, although our approach makes no appeal to reasons of the wrong kind, the solution itself is neutral on this issue. Hence, those who endorse alternative solutions can take our solution to be complementary to their own - as one part of the complex story regarding the rational diminishment of emotions over time. That said, we take our solution to undermine much of the support the puzzle of forever fitting emotions provides for the controversial assumptions underwriting these alternative approaches. For example, the puzzle of forever fitting emotions no longer provides a reason to accept that reasons of the wrong kind can be normative for emotions (Howard, 2023), that emotions can be rationally self-consuming (Na'aman, 2021b, or that the diminishment of bereavement induced sadness is incomprehensible from the reasons responsive perspective (Marušić, 2018).

We proceed as follows: First, we will take a detour through epistemic rationality. We will sketch what we take to be a promising picture of the relationship between epistemic rationality and the rationality of attention (sections 2.1 and 2.2). Following this, we will argue that this picture generalizes naturally to the rationality of emotions (section 3.1). This provides us with the groundwork for our solution to the puzzle (sections 3.2 and 3.3). Finally, we close by outlining some of the advantages of our approach over its most prominent rivals (4). Whilst our solution is general, our main example will be the eventual diminishment of sadness following bereavement.[8]

2 ATTENTION AND EPISTEMIC RATIONALITY

2.1 Attention & the Rationality of Belief

To illustrate our solution, it will be useful to pursue an analogy with belief. Consider the analog of (2) for belief:

[7] C.f. Marušić (2018), p16.

[8] The puzzle is often framed as concerning the diminishment of *grief*. However, as Cholbi (2019), 2022a) points out, it is not clear that we should think of grief as an emotion at all. Rather, grief can be thought of as a complex emotional process involving many distinct emotions at different stages. Hence, we prefer to frame our discussion specifically in terms of bereavement-induced sadness – one of the (possibly many) emotions characteristically associated with grief.

2B. If one possesses an undefeated reason to believe p, then one rationally ought to believe p.

At first, (2B) might sound like a truism. But this appearance is deceptive.[9] To see the problem, it will be helpful to consider an example. Friedman (2020) asks us to consider a subject who needs to ascertain how many windows there are on the Chrysler building. The subject sets up outside of Grand Central Station and begins to count. Our subject is in an informationally rich environment. Her senses are bombarded with new information. She passively acquires a great deal of new evidence and could form many new beliefs based on this evidence. If (2B) is correct then not only would it be rational for her to form these beliefs, but she is rationally obligated to do so. This is a faulty prediction. Our subject has an important task to complete – she must ascertain the number of windows on the Chrysler building (let's assume that the success of her window business depends on the accuracy of her count). If she was to form even a reasonable number of the beliefs supported by her new evidence (other than those pertaining to the number of windows on the Chrysler building) she would lose count. Her inquiry would be left in ruins. So, it seems patently irrational for her to form these beliefs. She ought not form all the beliefs supported by her evidence. Indeed, she ought not even respond to most of these reasons.

A natural response here is that the demand not to form these beliefs is merely practical (or, perhaps, 'zetetic'), rather than epistemic. If she had formed these beliefs, she would not be violating any epistemic norms. Indeed, she could be entirely epistemically rational. After all, her acts of belief formation would appear to respect the demands placed on her by her evidence. The resultant beliefs would be entirely fitting and, if based on her new evidence, would be epistemically rational.

We think this is correct, as far as it goes.[10] If she was to form these beliefs (on the basis of the relevant evidence), she would not be epistemically irrational. But this does not vindicate (2b). After all, (2b) claims not only that our subject is epistemically permitted to form these beliefs, but that she is obligated

[9] Indeed, its falsity is widely recognized within epistemology. Pertinent examples of rejections (explicit or implied) of (2B) or similar principles can be found in Harman (1986), Kelly (2007), Nelson (2010), Cohen (2016), Dogramaci (2018), Steinberger (2019), Elga & Rayo (2018, 2022), and Friedman (2020). This list is by no means exhaustive.

[10] It might be suggested that since zetetic norms pertain to the formation of belief they are epistemic. So, there is a sense in which she would be epistemically irrational if she switched attention away from the count. We prefer to use 'epistemic' to refer to reasons that bear on the fittingness of doxastic states. But we're perfectly happy to countenance a broader sense of 'epistemic' whereby it pertains to the general rationality of belief formation processes. We are sympathetic to Kelly's (2003) suggestion that the domain of 'theoretical rationality' includes both norms on rational inquiry together with purely epistemic norms which are non-instrumental and bear specifically on the rationality of belief. Put this way, our suggestion is that even if the resultant beliefs are theoretically irrational, they are epistemically rational. Even if there are genuinely epistemic norms on inquiry these are best thought of as action rather than state norms. However, our concern here is primarily with the rationality of token beliefs or emotional episodes. So, the issue is somewhat peripheral to our discussion. For a recent defense of genuinely epistemic norms on inquiry see Friedman (2020) and Flores & Woodard (2023). For arguments against genuinely epistemic norms on inquiry see Thorstad (2022) and Falbo (2023).

to form them. If this is correct, then epistemic and practical rationality place directly conflicting demands on our subject in this case. This is not a comfortable conclusion. If the demands of practical and epistemic rationality clash here, then they clash always and everywhere. Friedman's example is not special. It is characteristic of our normal situation. We always possess more evidence than we can respond to,[11] and constantly responding to every new item of evidence we come to possess (or every item of evidence we possess and have not yet fully responded to) would render any sustained cognitive task impossible. It is implausible that the demands placed on us by our evidence conflict so consistently and strongly with those placed on us by practical rationality.

Thankfully, it is possible to avoid this result. Our suggestion is that epistemic demands are placed on us at most by the evidence we are attending to, or at least tokening mental representations of, at a given time. Evidence that we are not representing at a given time doesn't demand a response from us at that time. Friedman's subject is engaged in a task that demands of her that she attend only to evidence that pertains to the number of windows on the Chrysler building. So, this is the evidence she should respond to. Her failure to attend to and thus respond to various other bits of evidence available to her does not constitute a failure of epistemic rationality. Nonetheless, if her attention was to shift and she were to start attending to evidence concerning the musician playing down the street then, if she is to be epistemically rational, she should form the beliefs supported by this evidence, even if practically speaking it is not the evidence to which she ought to be attending.[12] Summing up: to be responsive to evidence, a belief must be based on that evidence. And, in order for a belief to be based on a piece of evidence, the subject must token a mental representation of that evidence (Cohen, 2016; Boghossian, 2014; Marcus, 2012; and Neta, 2019).[13] So, whilst it is true that we are epistemically permitted to believe what our evidence supports, we are not permitted to do so in any old way.

2.2 The Rationality of Attention

We have suggested that subjects are, at most, epistemically obligated to form the beliefs supported by the evidence of which they are, on some level, occurrently aware.[14] But occurrent awareness is not entirely passive. It is governed, in part, by attention. And attention can be brought under active control. As

[11] This point is pressed forcefully by Nelson (2010).

[12] We are not the first to make suggestions along these lines - many of the authors cited in footnote 9 make similar proposals regarding the relationship between attention and the demands of rationality.

[13] This claim about basing is not uncontroversial. Nonetheless, we will assume it in what follows. See Evans (2012) for a purely dispositional theory of basing that does away with the representational component.

[14] In reality, it may be that the demands of epistemic rationality are even weaker – e.g. it may be that we are only obligated to form a particular subset of the beliefs supported by the evidence of which we are occurrently aware. But this will not matter much in what follows.

such, attention admits of rational normative appraisal.[15,16] So, there is a further dimension to the normative appraisal of acts of belief formation. We can ask not only whether a belief was properly based on the evidence, but also whether that evidence was the evidence to which the subject ought to have been attending.

This is important, as the rationality of attention is governed not only (if at all) by epistemic reasons, but also by reasons of prudence and morality. That is to say, reasons that fail to bear on the epistemic rationality of beliefs (reasons of the wrong kind, in this respect) can be reasons of the right kind for directing one's attention to one piece of evidence rather than another. They can include practical, epistemic, moral, and even aesthetic factors. To see this, imagine a modification of Friedman's Chrysler building example. Suppose that, whilst counting the windows, our subject notices what could be an assault occurring in one of the rooms. At the same time, she becomes aware of the incredible musical performance taking place down the street. At this point, our subject is forced to make a choice. If she attends to the potential assault, she will be able to ascertain whether or not a genuine assault is taking place. If it is, she will be able to alert the authorities. And if she attends to the street musician, then she will witness a musical performance of great beauty and significance. However, if she does either of these things, she will lose her count and, as a result, her window business will be thrown into jeopardy. The reasons at play here are moral, prudential, and perhaps, aesthetic. She has moral reasons to attend to the assault, aesthetic or prudential reasons to attend to the performance, and prudential reasons to continue with the count. Whether she ought to stick to her count, and thus form beliefs supported by the evidence she acquires in so doing, will depend on the weight of these competing reasons. The epistemic rationality of her belief will be entirely independent of these considerations (at least in the narrow sense described in footnote 10). Regardless of whether or not she shifts her attention, the epistemic rationality of her beliefs will be determined by the extent to which they are supported by the evidence of which she is aware. Nonetheless, there will be a further practical and moral dimension along which the resultant beliefs will be evaluable.

3 ATTENDING TO REASONS FOR EMOTIONS

3.1 Attention and the Rationality of Emotion

In sections 2.1 and 2.2 we argued that a subject can possess an undefeated reason to believe p, and yet not be epistemically obligated to believe p. We suggested that we are, at most, epistemically obligated to respond to those reasons

[15]We don't mean to suggest that attention is always under active control. Our attention is often triggered involuntarily by factors beyond our control. It may be that the involuntary directing of attention also admits of normative appraisal – for example, by manifesting a subject's values. We do not take a stand on this here.

[16]For recent work on the ethics of attention see Bommarito (2013), Yetter Chappell & Yetter-Chappell (2016), King (2020), Smith & Archer (2020), and Watzl (forthcoming).

of which we are occurently aware, or perhaps even those to which we are directly attending. Such awareness is, in large part, governed by attention. And attention admits of rational appraisal. Furthermore, whilst we have assumed that only epistemic reasons (i.e. evidence) weigh for and against the formation of particular beliefs, a wider range of reasons – including practical, moral, and aesthetic reasons – weigh for and against the directing of attention. This entails that there is a further dimension along which acts of belief formation can be rationally appraised and a wider range of reasons that bear on such appraisals.

The same, we believe, is true of emotions. For an emotional episode to be rational it is not sufficient that a subject possesses undefeated reasons for that emotion. The emotion must be based on those reasons, and basing must proceed via a representation of the reason. We are required, at most, to emotionally respond to those reasons of which we are tokening mental representations at a given time. And, again, the tokening of such representations is, in large part, governed by attention. Thus, just like acts of belief formation, emotional episodes admit of rational appraisal along multiple dimensions. The warrantedness of an emotional episode turns on whether or not it is supported by reasons that bear on the fittingness of that emotional episode. Practical reasons do not bear on the fittingness of an emotional episode. However, such reasons do bear on whether or not a subject should have been attending to a particular reason in the first place.

As an illustration, imagine you have a friend who, once upon a time, borrowed a significant amount of money from you and never paid you back. Given other facts about your relationship, this is a reason for anger. But you rarely attend to this reason. Now suppose that you are out having a good time with your friend, the debt far from your mind, yet you are suddenly overcome with anger toward your friend. You may be angry for no reason, or you may be angry for a bad reason. Either way, even though you possess good reasons to be angry at your friend, your anger is unwarranted – it is not based on the anger-supporting reasons you possess.

Now imagine a slight modification of the case: again, you are out having a good time with your friend. This time, your friend mentions that they recently made a large and frivolous purchase. This reminds you of the unpaid debt. Again, you feel angry at your friend. But this time the anger is entirely warranted. Not only is it supported by the reasons you possess – but it is supported by the reasons to which you are attending. Your anger is properly based on a reason of the right kind.

3.2 Attention & Forever Fitting Emotions

How does this help with the puzzle of forever-fitting emotions? Well, firstly, it suggests that premise (2) of the argument is false. Thus, the argument is unsound. Possessing a reason for an emotion does not rationally require that one form the relevant emotion. However, we can go further than merely pointing out a false premise in the argument. Our observations so far allow us to tell a positive story about the rationality of emotions' diminishment over time.

We have assumed that practical reasons don't weigh for or against emotional states. However, practical reasons do, in combination with moral, epistemic, and aesthetic reasons, weigh in favor of our attending to certain reasons rather than others. Consider those who experience the typical pattern of grief: a short period of intense sadness (along with other emotions such as anger, confusion, and displacement) followed by what, to them, may seem like a surprisingly quick return to their psychological baseline. Typically, immediately following a loss, reasons of morality and prudence will demand that subjects attend to their loss. Their loss constitutes a reason for sadness. So, if they are properly reasons responsive, they will experience sadness. Such experiences of sadness will be entirely fitting and warranted. However, as time passes the normative demands on their attention will shift. Competing demands of both morality and prudence will emerge and exert increasing normative pressure on the subject to attend to other matters. The loss of someone central to one's life leaves a void. Our loved ones are central to our lives both practically and emotionally. They shape our goals, aspirations, and even our sense of identity. In recalibrating our lives following a loss it is essential to attend to the loss itself, and the role the loved one played in our life. But once this adjustment has taken place a major reason of prudence to attend to our loss disappears. Moreover, as time passes those constant reminders of the loss, factors that force the griever's attention toward the death of their loved one, will gradually fade and lose their potency. As a result, as long as they are responsive to these normative pressures, the subject's patterns of attention will typically shift. They will naturally attend less to their loss and will thus experience fewer and fewer episodes of bereavement-induced sadness as time passes.

The picture that emerges is as follows: As time passes sadness remains fitting.[17] A loss needn't cease to be a reason for sadness. The experience of bereavement-induced sadness long after a loss needn't be unfitting, nor must it be unwarranted if it is properly based on continuing reasons for sadness. Moreover, attention to reasons of grief is typically demanded soon after a loss, meaning that it would be all things considered inappropriate for a subject not to attend to these reasons, and thus not feel the pain of loss. However, as time passes some of the normative pressures in favor of attending to the loss will disappear, and other competing demands will emerge. In some cases, subjects will be permitted, but not obligated, to continue attending to their loss. In other cases, subjects may be obligated, perhaps morally, to direct their attention to other matters. In neither case will the subject's failure to experience continued sadness manifest a failure to respond properly to the demands placed on them by their reasons.

Beyond a solution to the puzzle (and the rationalization of our typical practices), our analysis provides the resources to evaluate emotional responses on a

[17] Does bereavement-induced sadness remain forever fitting? We are open to this possibility. One author accepts that, at least in some cases, such sadness remains forever fitting. The other author is more skeptical. Regardless, we both accept that a subject for whom bereavement-induced sadness remains fitting can (and often will) occupy entirely warranted emotional states from which such sadness is absent.

case-by-case basis, and to account for less typical patterns. For example, we are able to understand how an emotion may be rationally delayed when there are urgent and significant requirements on attention. Given such circumstances, we may, for example, be required not to attend to our loss, meaning that reasons for sadness cannot, for the time being, be rationally represented. Similarly, we are able to understand as rational and fitting sudden onsets of emotion in response to triggers such as smells which remind us of a lost loved one (we return to this point later).

3.3 Diminishing Intensity

There is something missing from the picture we have presented so far. Until now, we have characterized the diminution of emotions such as bereavement-induced sadness in terms of the frequency of episodes, and we have explained why the diminishing frequency of such episodes does not manifest a failure to respond properly to our reasons. However, as time passes, emotions also (typically) become less intense. Yet, our reasons for some emotions do not become any weaker. Doesn't this entail that our emotional responses are inappropriate after all? To sharpen the question, notice that emotional episodes can be unfitting not only in kind, but also in intensity: if I burst into a flaming rage over some slightly annoying issue (my seatbelt doesn't click in), my response is unfitting. Moreover, the appropriate intensity of an emotional reaction is determined by the reasons that count in favor of that reaction, not on the extent to which we are attending to those reasons. So, if the reasons for an emotion remain untouched, what explains the declining intensity of our emotional responses over time?

Here is our response: The fitting intensity of an emotional reaction is determined largely by the weight of the various reasons that favor that emotion. Consider an analogy with fear. Suppose a climber is halfway up a route when they notice that the bolts they are clipped into are rusty and wearing thin. This induces fear. Next, they realize that their rope is stretched tight over a sharp edge, and it is beginning to fray. This induces more fear. Finally, the rock they are holding onto starts to crumble, and their feet start to slip. Their fear increases dramatically. Any one of these factors would be a reason for fear. But they would not, by themselves, render fitting the intense degree of fear the climber experiences. This intense fear is rendered fitting only by the various fear-inducing factors in combination.

The same, we suggest, is true of emotions like bereavement-induced sadness. The loss of a loved one brings with it many reasons for sadness: the fact that our loved one will not be at our wedding, the fact that we will no longer be able to ask our loved one for advice etc. These are all reasons for sadness. The warranted intensity of an episode of sadness is determined by the multitude of reasons to which that episode is responsive and their weight. That is, we are warranted in feeling sadness only at an intensity appropriate to the reasons we are attending to. When we are attending only to one aspect of our loss, the fact that we need their advice and they are not there, for example, a certain inten-

sity of sadness will be warranted. When we are attending to another, or several other aspects, a different intensity might be warranted. Now, shortly after the death of a person we love, we are often overwhelmed with reasons for grief. But as life goes on, the attention we direct toward our loss will become piecemeal, and the intensity of our sadness will diminish accordingly.

To expand on this point: Brady (2010) has suggested that emotions function to direct our attention. The facts that one is driving and that one has little driving experience, are together reasons for anxiety. If one is attending to these reasons, then it is fitting for one to experience anxiety. And this anxiety will function to direct one's attention to things one ought to be cautious about. Likewise, the loss of a loved one constitutes a reason for sadness. And the experience of sadness will direct one's attention to specific aspects of one's loss, many of which will also constitute reasons for sadness (along with the many other emotions tied up with grief). For example, our sadness will direct our attention to the things we valued about the relationship, it will direct our attention to cherished memories, and it will direct our attention to the counterfactual possibilities of what could have been had our loved one not died. These factors combined warrant a greater intensity of sadness than any such factor alone.

As long as they are not disturbed (as is often the case immediately following a loss), such grieving sessions are self-perpetuating. This explains why, shortly after the death of a loved one, we tend to experience intense sadness. It also explains why, in later stages when attention is needed elsewhere, our sadness is less intense. As the demands on our attention shift, we are able to attend to fewer aspects of our loss. Similarly, as memories fade, some aspects of our loss, for example plans we had with the deceased, are forgotten. We possess fewer reasons for sadness, and the cognitive connections between the reasons that remain become weaker. Nonetheless, knowledge of our loss remains and, we believe, often remains a reason for sadness.[18]

4 ADVANTAGES OF THE ATTENTION VIEW

Our aim thus far has been to provide a new resolution to the puzzle of forever-fitting emotions. Our aim has not been to criticize rival solutions. There has

[18]It may also be that the subject's understanding of their reasons affects the fitting reaction. For example, imagine that our climber notices that they have 'back clipped' their rope, but it doesn't immediately occur to them that this puts them in danger. It may be that fear becomes fitting only once they come to understand the danger their back-clipping puts them in. This is significant in the case of bereavement since, as Ratcliffe, Richardson, & Millar (2023) and Cholbi (2022b) suggest, the altering intensity of our emotional response to loss may be, in part, a function of the griever's coming to grasp the significance of their loss through the grieving process. We find this plausible and take it to dovetail nicely with our own account. However, it may also be that the back-clipped climber ought to experience fear as soon as they notice the back-clipping. That is, it may be that they initially fail to respond appropriately to their reasons, and only respond properly once they grasp the significance of their reasons. The same may be true of our response to loss – the grieving process may partly constitute a process of coming to properly respond to the reasons of loss through a greater understanding of the significance of those reasons. This possibility is also consistent with our account.

been little need to do so. After all, our solution is independently motivated and turns on principles that should be acceptable to all. Strictly speaking, advocates of alternative approaches can adopt our solution as complementary to their own. However, precisely because our approach is independently motivated it renders the resources introduced by rival approaches explanatorily superfluous. Moreover, our solution has several important advantages over rival approaches. We close by noting these advantages.

4.1 Forever Fitting Emotions and Already Fitting Emotions

Suppose that this year's family gathering has gone badly. There was an argument, things were said that cannot be unsaid, and everybody left in a state of simmering resentment. Furthermore, suppose that it is your turn to host next year's gathering. This fact is a reason for anxiety. With the events of this year's gathering fresh in mind you will likely experience such anxiety. But this anxiety will (or, at least, ought to) fade quickly. You will go through most of the year entirely unconcerned about the upcoming gathering. Yet, as the time draws near, and you have practical reasons to attend to the gathering, you will, again feel anxiety. And this anxiety is entirely fitting. After all, the event will likely be a nightmare.

This situation generates a problem analogous to the puzzle of forever-fitting emotions. At t^1, immediately following the disastrous family gathering, you know p: the proposition that at t^2, a year later, you will be expected to host a gathering that will likely be disastrous. The fitting response to p is anxiety. And you retain your knowledge of p throughout the period from t^1 to t^2. Premise (2) of the puzzle of forever fitting emotions tells us that "if one possesses an undefeated reason for E, then rationally one ought to E." Hence, if (2) is correct you ought to feel anxiety throughout the year-long period from t^1 to t^2. Yet this is clearly not the case. Such continued anxiety would be pathological.

This puzzle cannot be resolved by holding that reasons expire (**Na'aman, 2021b**). It is not as if p ceases to be a reason for anxiety at any point between t^1 and t^2. If you are reminded halfway through the year that you will be hosting the gathering in 6 months you may well feel anxious. And this would be entirely appropriate. It would be no good for an interlocutor to try and free you of your worries by telling you "You have nothing to worry about – the gathering is half a year away". This advice is dismissive and misses the mark. The fact that the event is half a year away does not affect whether you *have anything to worry about*.[19] You do have something to worry about – the fact that you will have to deal with the fallout of a disastrous family gathering.

The better advice in cases like this is "forget about it for now – the gathering is half a year away". This acknowledges that the upcoming gathering is cause for concern but emphasizes that this reason need not be attended to for now. And it is precisely the advice our account suggests.[20]

[19] A Marušić (2018) argues, temporal distance does not, in and of itself, directly affect how we should feel.

[20] Howard (2023) is, we think, able to secure the same result. However, he has to appeal to reasons

4.2 Recurrent Grief

The dominant strategy for addressing the puzzle of forever fitting emotions is to hold that emotions cease to be fitting or appropriate as circumstances change. For example, Na'aman (2021b) holds that grief is rationally self-consuming: a fact only constitutes a reason for an emotion relative to certain background conditions. One's loss is a reason for sadness during the grieving process. However, once the process of grief has concluded the background conditions change and one's loss no longer renders fitting the same intense sadness it once did.[21] Likewise, advocates of the 'wrong kind of reason' approach such as Howard (2023) hold that as time passes practical factors start to weigh against the appropriateness of bereavement-induced sadness. Eventually, whilst this sadness remains fitting, it ceases to be rationally appropriate.

Such approaches face a prima facie challenge: Grief can recur long after the grieving process has seemingly run its course. Such recurrent grief can occur for many reasons - a particular smell associated with the deceased directs the attention of the bereaved toward their loss, or a life event such as the advent of parenthood directs their attention toward their own deceased parent.[22] If bereavement-induced sadness ceases to be rationally appropriate once the grieving process has run its course it is not clear how we can avoid condemning those experiencing recurrent grief as irrational.

The attentional approach captures recurrent grief straightforwardly. The loss of a loved one never ceases to be a reason for intense sadness. As the bereaved goes through the grieving process the normative demands on their attention shift. Hence, they experience fewer and fewer episodes of sadness. However, when they do attend to their loss their experience of intense sadness is entirely appropriate.

4.3 Reasons Responsiveness

Marušić (2018) argues that the diminishment of grief is unintelligible from within the perspective of reason. When faced with a loss we are able to take a detached stance toward our grief - to view it as a psychological process that we will go through. And we can predict that, at the end of this process, the pain of our loss will diminish. However, we are unable to view this process as responsive to reason. As Marušić remarks, when we try to comprehend the diminishment of our sadness from within the reason-responsive perspective all we find are reasons of the wrong kind (2018, p 16). This renders the anticipation of grief's diminishment all the more painful.

We agree that the anticipation of grief's diminishment is painful. It is painful because before we draw fine-grained distinctions between the reasons for sadness and reasons for attention it is hard to see how the diminishment of bereavement-

of the wrong kind in order to do so. We consider this a cost.

[21] Marušić (2022) makes a similar suggestion.

[22] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for these examples, and for pushing us to discuss recurrent grief.

induced sadness could manifest anything other than a failure to properly respect our loss. However, once we distinguish between reasons for sadness and reasons for attention the diminishment of grief intelligible from within the reasons responsive perspective.

It is true that, when we search for reasons, the reasons we find fail to bear on the fittingness of bereavement-induced sadness. However, these reasons do appropriately bear on the manner in which we direct our attention. And it is in virtue of our responsiveness to the changing normative demands on our attention that our sadness diminishes over time. Hence, the anticipated diminishment of bereavement induced sadness is, in principle, intelligable as responsive to reasons. That is, the attentional approach allows us to see that the anticipated diminishment of sadness will not manifest a diminishment in the significance of our loss. Hence, it may render the anticipation of this diminishment at least somewhat less painful.[23]

5 CONCLUSION

We have argued that the diminishment of emotions can be rational even when an undefeated reason to feel them remains. This is because emotional episodes, if they are to be appropriate, must be based on reasons of the right kind. For emotional episodes to be so based they must be caused by the (conscious or unconscious) tokenings of representations of these reasons. And such tokenings typically become less appropriate as time passes because the normative demands on our attention shift. This approach removes the need to appeal to reasons of the wrong kind, it removes the need to hold that emotions can be rationally self-consuming, and it renders the diminishment of bereavement-induced sadness (along with other forever fitting emotions) intelligible from within the reasons responsive perspective.

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[23] But, it might be asked, if we attend to a loss less and less over time, does this not manifest a reduction in the significance of our loss to us? And, if this is correct, does this not imply that our loss does eventually cease to be a reason for sadness? No. The importance or significance of a fact needn't be an especially powerful reason to attend to it. One of the most important things in my life is my relationship with my son. Yet, I rarely attend to it. I do not do so when I am at work, I do not do so when I am driving, I do not do so when I am at the gym. Indeed, it is rare that I do so at home (I'd far rather attend to him than to our relationship!). It would be absurd to claim that this manifests a failure to value our relationship, or to see it as deeply significant.

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