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ON EMOTIONAL TRUTH

abstract

Truth is not only a semantic notion, because it can involve our whole being, both intellectual and emotional. The emotional character of the truth determines its relevance for us. In this paper I will first discuss Ronald de Sousa's theory of emotional truth and the idea of the appropriateness of emotions in relation to judgment. Secondly, I will deal with Meinong's conception that emotions have both an evaluative and a cognitive character, allow us to know what the world is like, and consequently are related to truth. Truth then turns out to be a value. If something is valuable to me, it stirs an emotion. That is why truth is capable of attracting feelings. Emotional truth is that truth which attracts a justified knowledge-feeling. This is the basis on which we might develop an aesthetics of concepts whereby theories, in order to be established, need not only to be regarded as true but to produce an emotional involvement of the subjects.

keywords

emotions, truth, values, Alexius Meinong, Ronald de Sousa

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Introductory Remarks

In his *Selbstdarstellung* (1921) Meinong writes that the study of the 'True' intended as an objective value has a place both in the theory of knowledge and in logic. He goes on to assert that we call 'true' not only the factual objective (i.e., the state of affairs) and the judgment that apprehends it, but also the object presented by the feeling and the relation between this object and the experience (*Erlebnis*) which apprehends it. He then concludes: "This legitimizes, to a certain extent, the attempt to define the truth also in emotional terms" (Meinong, 1921, *GA* VII, p. 42). He does not elaborate further on the matter but refers us to his book *Über emotionale Präsentation* (1917), a very complex text having no specific bearing on our topic. The suggestion remains that for Meinong the issue has its relevance.

A key to understanding what he means by emotional truth is offered by an additional note concerning *Über emotionale Präsentation* published posthumously in the complete edition of his works (cf. Meinong, 1968, *GA* III, p. 750). Starting from this note, in my previous paper (Raspa, 2020) I was able to reconstruct the theoretical context in which Meinong's concept of emotional truth is placed. The notion of emotional truth has recently been studied most notably by Ronald de Sousa in his *Emotional Truth* (2011), where he builds on some of his own earlier articles and essays; a lively debate has also taken place among scholars working on the philosophy of emotions. Here I intend to use de Sousa's text as a starting point to examine the notion of emotional truth. Before addressing his position, however, a preliminary note is in order.

Basically, the present work is inspired by Aristotle's view that thought and emotions are common affections of the soul and the body.[1] As such therefore the two are related. According to Aristotle, all affections of the soul are related to a body: passion, gentleness, fear, pity, courage, joy, love, and hate involve a body, in the sense that their occurrence is accompanied by a concurrent affection of the body. Emotions arise in connection with a cognitive-evaluative act and can condition the way we perceive and make judgments about the world (cf. *Rhet.* I 2, 1356a 15-16; II 1, 1377b 31 - 1378a 1). For Aristotle, emotions are connected to judgments, opinions, and beliefs. They mostly refer to objects believed to exist by those who feel emotions, though such objects can also be merely imaginary. Aristotle writes that fear, defined as "a pain or disturbance due to imagining some destructive or painful evil in the

1 Cf. Aristotle, *De an.* I 4, 408b 25-27: "Thinking, loving, and hating are affections not of thought, but of that which has thought, so far as it has it."

future" (*Rhet.* II 5, 1382a 21-22), cannot arise without this representation and the conviction that it is *appropriate*, i.e., without the conviction that one may suffer some actual evil.[2] In short, for Aristotle emotion is a mental and physical intentional state, which contains cognitive-evaluative elements and can condition cognitive and evaluative processing.[3]

This thesis of the cognitive character of emotions, widely shared today,[4] and the one about the appropriateness of emotions are essential for the development of my argument. If emotions have a cognitive function, then they have some relation to truth. What kind of relation? Broadly speaking, we can assume that knowledge is aimed at knowing the truth. However, not all our cognitive faculties are true or false. For instance, representations are not, which is precisely why they differ from judgements. It could be argued that representations are related to truth in the sense that without them we would have no judgements, and therefore no truths either. Yet it is not in this sense that emotions are related to truth, but rather – as I intend to make clear later – insofar as certain features of objects are only knowable through emotions and without emotions would remain unknown to us. That is why emotions contribute to our knowledge of certain aspects of the world.

Truth and emotion. The question is: which is the noun and which is the adjective? This is not an idle question. The notion of emotional truth is placed in the 'common area' of the theory of values and the philosophy of emotions. To talk about the kind of truth I call 'emotional truth' it is necessary to clarify what we mean by emotions. Now, one can take 'emotional' to be an attribute of 'truth' or can speak of 'true emotions,' and regard truth as a property of emotion. I believe however that true emotion and emotional truth are two different notions, even if in ongoing debates they are often used interchangeably.

What is the relevance of the concept of emotional truth? That it allows us to tackle the problem of relevance. Truth is a semantic notion. But it is not only a semantic notion. It can involve our whole being, both intellectual and emotional. From a semantic point of view, a true proposition is equivalent to another true proposition. From an emotional point of view, this is not always the case. A certain true proposition can be associated with feelings, hopes, and a longing for justice, which make it more relevant than another true proposition. The emotional character of the truth determines its relevance – in some cases, its political significance.

My following remarks will fall into three sections. First, I will discuss de Sousa's theses as well as some critical responses to them; I will then give a short account of Meinong's notion of emotional truth; finally, I will propose the idea of an aesthetic of concepts.

1. Emotional Truth According to Ronald de Sousa and His Critics

1.1. Emotions as Intentional and Cognitive States

According to de Sousa (2011), "emotions are states of a subject, but commonly refer to and respond to something outside that subject" (p. 29). Mental states are *intentional*; they relate to or are directed at one or more of a variety of objects. In the case of emotions, the object towards which the state is directed is not always the same as the object causing the emotion; therefore, we must distinguish between the target and the cause of an emotion. De Sousa gives this example: "If I get angry at you because sleep deprivation has made me irritable, you are the target of my anger without really being its cause" (p. 30).

Emotions have a *cognitive* function. They provide "some sort of information about the real

2 Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* II 5, 1382b 33-34: "fear is felt by those who believe something to be likely to happen to them, at the hands of particular persons, in a particular form, and at a particular time."

3 I have discussed these topics in Raspa (2016, pp. 177-184).

4 See Solomon (2004, p. 76): "notably the idea that emotions are in some sense 'cognitive' and consist (at least in part) of evaluative judgments and thus display a kind of intelligence have become mainstream, even popular." But some people disagree: see for ex. Yang (2016).

world, and in particular about an external domain of value" (p. 28). According to de Sousa, emotions allow us to know values, insofar as they not only perceive values but "also constitute them" (p. 8). He assumes without argument – as he claims (cf. pp. 20, 25 fn. 4, 70) – that emotions are perceptions of value.[5]

1.2. Appropriate Emotions

According to de Sousa, if emotions are perceptions of value, then they are simply as true or false as other perceptions are. Emotions are true if they correctly represent or apprehend evaluative facts. However, when we apply the notion of truth to emotions, "the sense of that notion is significantly different from that of 'truth' as typically ascribed to propositional or 'factual' beliefs" (p. 21). These assertions seem to be at odds, but subsequently de Sousa goes into some more detail about the concept of truth and argues that "the ordinary sense of truth, as it applies to propositions and is naturally extended to beliefs, is only a special case of a more general property, which can be applied to a broad class of mental acts or events, including desires, and most emotions reasonably construed" (p. 28). The ordinary concept of truth which applies to propositions, beliefs, and judgements is only a species of a broader generic truth applying to all mental states (as we will see in more detail below).

What kind of truth are we dealing with? In the case of emotions, "appropriateness is just like truth" (p. 20). But when is an emotion appropriate? To answer this question, we need to introduce the concept of *formal object*. In the clear words of Mikko Salmela, a formal object is "an evaluative property that each token emotion of the same type explicitly or implicitly ascribes to its particular object and that provides the standard of fittingness for individual emotions of that type" (Salmela, 2014, p. 12; cf. also de Sousa, 2011, p. 72). For example, a determinate fear is appropriate if its formal object is the Dangerous. The concept is simple even if the definition is circular: an emotion is appropriate if its particular object fits its formal object; in other words, "if the particular object of emotion has the formal property that the emotional evaluation ascribes to it" (Salmela, 2014, p. 12).

In summary, emotions are intentional and cognitive states which allow us to know values, and can be appropriate or inappropriate in relation to a given object. As a matter of fact, some of these contentions are not new, since they can be traced back to Aristotle. They provide the theoretical basis for the notion of emotional truth.

1.3. Emotional Truth

De Sousa assumes a generic conception of truth as "correspondence between a belief and something else," that is, the state of affairs the belief is about (de Sousa, 2011, p. 51). A correspondence theory of truth presupposes the existence of something outside of my belief or judgment. The meaning of any word or idea is based on the relation between the word and a corresponding object.

Any assertion of a truth involves the possibility that it can be corrected by means of a *norm* referring to something outside the epistemic framework of the person making the assertion. This implies a kind of correspondence that de Sousa summarizes in the maxim: "*when you tell a story, the truth of the story is not part of the content of the story*" (p. 52; cf. also p. 48). De Sousa refers to something that is external to the story itself. Yet while for beliefs truth coincides with success,[6] for other attitudes it lies elsewhere (cf. p. 56). What is the meaning of 'success' here?

Let us keep in mind the following definition of generic truth:

5 In this regard, de Sousa only quotes Tappolet (2000). A critical discussion of this thesis is offered by De Monticelli (2016).

6 "Truth is a norm of success for belief" (de Sousa, 2011, p. 49; cf. also p. 55).

> A mental state *M* can be said to be generically true or false, if
> (*GT1*) *M* is subject to a norm *N*;
> (*GT2*) *N* is determined by *M* itself; yet
> (*GT3*) *N* looks for its satisfaction to some reality existing independently of *M* (p. 55).

A belief is satisfied if it is subject to a norm, namely truth (*GT1*), the content of which determines the specific character of that norm (*GT2*), whose satisfaction is independent of the belief's existence (*GT3*).
De Sousa distinguishes two properties of propositional attitudes, success and satisfaction, which we have just mentioned and by means of which he defines emotional truth.

> Satisfaction – he writes – is a purely semantic property: a truth-valued entity (inscription, belief, desire, hope, regret, or what have you) is satisfied if and only if the proposition it contains is true. But success is a matter of whether the point or aim of the propositional attitude has been achieved (pp. 56-57).

For beliefs, satisfaction and success coincide, because the aim of belief is truth. For other propositional attitudes, things are different: desire, for example, seeks satisfaction, but its success (or rightness) is independent of truth. For a desire that remains unsatisfied is not wrong. The same applies to a feeling like unrequited love, which is nonetheless a genuine feeling. To understand the difference between satisfaction and success, let us refer once again to the example of fear. The formal object of fear – we have said – is the Dangerous. "*Fear that p* is satisfied iff *p* is true, but it is *successful* iff *p specifies a situation that is actually dangerous*," that is, iff *p* actually fits the formal object of the emotion (p. 57). In any case, the success of emotion is independent of its semantic satisfaction. Fear of monsters is not semantically satisfied, because monsters do not exist, but it may be successful. De Sousa offers the following definition of emotional truth:

> Emotional truth, then, is generic truth: it refers not to semantic satisfaction, consisting in the truth of the propositional content, but to success – whatever that may amount to for a given emotion (p. 58).

This definition is unsatisfactory. It implies that emotional truth has to do not with truth (semantic satisfaction), but with being taken as true. Moreover, the previous definition of generic truth contains the notion of satisfaction, while here emotional truth refers to success, not to satisfaction. Therefore, de Sousa rewrites the conditions of generic truth for emotions:

> (*EGT1*) emotions are subject to a norm defined by their formal object;
> (*EGT2*) this norm is determined by the emotion itself;
> (*EGT3*) the attainment of success for emotions depends on a vast holistic network of factors (biological facts, social norms, individual biographical experiences) (cf. p. 64; cf. also p. 38).

What does emotional truth really consist of? Both these conditions and some other claims – "Anyone whose experience lacks the appropriate valence, however, might then be said to have an objectively false emotion" (p. 60); "The emotion is appropriate or 'true' in the specific circumstance if and only if the object itself actually has property *F*" (p. 72) – suggest that de Sousa attributes truth to emotions – as he himself says (cf. p. 44). But while the truth (of beliefs) does not admit of gradations, emotions, which may be more or less correct or

appropriate or fit, should admit of varying degrees of truth (cf. pp. 54-55, 66).
Emotions have a dual function: they tell me what is going on inside me and they give me information about the world outside me. They can do this rightly or wrongly. Asserting that emotions give me information about the world implies the possibility of error. Moreover, each emotion has its own specific formal object, because de Sousa regards the variety of emotions as making it impossible to identify a specific kind of formal objects for all emotions. Each emotion is unique to each individual (cf. pp. 69-75).

1.4. Mikko Salmela's Criticisms of de Sousa

The character of de Sousa's conception of emotional truth outlined above is made explicit in stronger terms by Mikko Salmela's criticism: when de Sousa speaks of emotional truth, he clearly means true emotions.
Like de Sousa, Salmela ascribes a cognitive value to emotions and uses the notion of appropriateness or correctness to indicate the relation between emotions and objects in the external world. Since many scholars believe that appropriateness is in the emotional domain something analogous to truth, then – asks Salmela – why not simply say that emotions can be true or false? There are two obstacles to considering emotions as truth-apt: (1) the thesis that only sentences and propositional attitudes with assertoric content (beliefs, thoughts, and judgments) can be true or false; and (2) the subjectivity of emotions, as I mentioned earlier. However, Salmela believes he can provide an adequate definition of emotional truth. Like de Sousa, he claims that emotions can be true and false (cf. Salmela, 2014, p. 106), but disagrees with him on the definition of emotional truth. His argument runs as follows.
According to de Sousa, "emotional truth refers not to semantic satisfaction but to success, which is tied to the correctness of the emotional evaluation" (p. 106).[7] "Emotional truth is thus a matter of fittingness of the particular emotional object with the relevant formal object". But, Salmela objects, "the truth of an emotion cannot be defined in terms of its success alone. This would entail that my fear of monsters is true insofar as monsters are dangerous, whether or not they exist, which is absurd. The propositional content of one's emotion must also be semantically satisfied or the target of one's emotion must exist" (p. 107). Salmela does not accept non-existent objects – otherwise, if I believe that monsters are dangerous, this has clearly an effect on me, and it is not absurd.

> In general – Salmela concludes – , an emotion is true if and only if its actual object fits the formal object of the relevant emotion type [this is de Sousa's point of view], and the propositional content of the emotion is semantically satisfied or the target of the emotion exists or did exist [this is Salmela's addition] (p. 107).

De Sousa's reply to this point is fragile. He concedes that there is a certain arbitrariness in selecting only success as a criterion and excluding satisfaction. And he adds: "I can happily say that a delusional fear, such as the fear of monsters or of God, is a false fear, on the ground that what doesn't exist isn't really dangerous" (de Sousa, 2011, p. 64). But invoking existence as a criterion for distinguishing true and false fears, as de Sousa does here, amounts to recognizing the validity of Salmela's point of view.
Additional remarks by Salmela make the picture I have outlined somewhat more complex. As we know from logic, we can be right on the basis of false assumptions, whereby the truth of a belief or emotion is independent of its fittingness. Some epistemic, non-factual emotions,

7 Cf. de Sousa (2011, p. 58): "The success of an emotion is tied to the correctness of that evaluation in any particular occurrence of that emotion."

such as fear and hope, which involve an uncertain belief, when they turn out to be true are transformed into something else (sadness or joy). In the case of epistemic emotions, satisfaction has to do not only with truth, but also with (subjective and objective) probability (cf. Salmela, 2014, pp. 108-109).
Of course, some people distinguish between appropriateness and truth. Here I will not consider other arguments about the truth-aptness of emotions, nor those that link the appropriateness of emotions to context, hence to factors such as biological facts, social norms, and individual biographical experiences. Let me now move on to discuss Alexius Meinong's concept of emotional truth.

2. Emotional Truth According to Meinong

Meinong defends, albeit with different arguments, general theses not dissimilar to those entertained by both de Sousa and Salmela. He makes the following claims: (1) emotions have an intentional and cognitive character, (2) they allow us to know values, and (3) can be appropriate or inappropriate (justified or unjustified) in relation to a given object.[8] Yet he goes one step further. De Sousa and Salmela are concerned with showing that truth and falsity do not exclusively belong to judgments and propositions, and that we can speak of true and false emotions. Meinong's focus is rather on characterizing truth, or at least some truths, as emotionally coloured. He considers truth not only from a semantic, but also an axiological point of view: if truth is a value, then it is the object of some emotions, in the sense that we can "feel" the value of truth.
The difference is not insignificant. In the first case, we limit ourselves to claiming that emotions are true or false and we speak of true emotions, for which the expression 'emotional truth' seems inappropriate to me. By contrast, in the second case we assert that certain truths, or true propositions, can be connected to emotions, so we investigate a specific aspect of truth, i.e., that it can be emotionally coloured.
By arguing that value is related to an emotion, and that emotions have both an intentional and cognitive character, Meinong places himself firmly within the Aristotelian tradition. He thinks that emotions allow us to know what the world is like, and that through them we become acquainted with specific features of the objects that otherwise would remain unknown to us. If emotions have a cognitive function, then – as I have said in the beginning – they have a relation to truth.
According to Kevin Mulligan (1998), emotions justify axiological beliefs and, conversely, emotions themselves are justified by perceptions, memories, and non-axiological beliefs. In addition, they are said to be appropriate if, and only if, the axiological judgments they support are correct. Like judgments, emotions too can be correct or incorrect, justified or unjustified. Referring to the Austrian philosophical tradition, in particular the one stemming from Brentano (1889), Mulligan (2017) has showed that Meinong's reflection belongs to this line of research which can be traced back to Aristotle.[9] Later we will see what Meinong means by justified emotions and how these are related to emotional truth. Although de Sousa does not mention Meinong (nor Brentano), the affinity between some of their views is explained by them both developing insights dating back to Aristotle. It would be interesting to discuss Aristotle's direct or indirect influence on these debates, but I cannot go into that question here.

8 A fundamental distinction between de Sousa and Salmela, on the one hand, and Meinong, on the other, is that the former do not accept non-existent objects. This, however, is irrelevant for the continuation of our discussion.
9 On the philosophy of emotions in the phenomenological tradition see Vendrell Ferran (2008); specifically on Meinong's theory of emotions see Vendrell Ferran (2009), Raspa (2013).

2.1. Knowledge as Justified Judgment [10]

In Meinong's view, truth has to do with something which is external to the subject, who does not produce truth, but knows it. Truth is grounded knowledge, expressed by a true judgment. Only judgments and, in very special circumstances, assumptions can be true or false, but they are said to be true based on their objectives (cf. Meinong, 1915, *GA* VI, pp. 38-40). Meinong calls 'objectives' the specific objects of judgments and assumptions (cf. Meinong, 1904, *GA* II, p. 387 [1960, p. 80]; 1910, *GA* IV, p. 44 [1983, p. 38]; 1915, *GA* VI, pp. 26-27), i.e., the states of affairs. They are higher-order ideal objects that at most subsist and are truth-bearers just as states of affairs are. A true objective subsists, it designates a fact and hence is factual (*tatsächlich*); by contrast, a false objective is non-factual (*untatsächlich*) (cf. Meinong 1910, *GA* IV, p. 69 [1983, p. 55]).[11] This does not mean that truth is the same as factuality, because truth requires apprehension, that is, a cognitive act (cf. Meinong, [1917/1918] – 1978, *GA. Ergänzungsband*, p. 346). Factuality is an ontological, truth an epistemological notion. "Knowing is true judging [*Erkennen ist wahres Urteilen*]" (p. 343), yet this does not mean that each true judgment is knowledge, because a judgment can happen to be true by accident and therefore be irrelevant to knowledge. Knowledge is justified true judgment (cf. pp. 344-345).

2.2. Truth as Value

'True', 'beautiful' and 'good' are values. If something is valuable to me, it does not leave me indifferent but rather arouses an emotion. Values attract, or are capable of attracting, certain feelings. An object has value insofar as it is able to provide the foundation for a value-feeling (i.e., pleasure or displeasure for the existence or the non-existence of something) (cf. Meinong, 1894, *GA* III, p. 37). If we apply this definition of value to a property like beauty, it follows that an object is beautiful if it can provide the foundation for a positive aesthetic feeling. It can do so because it possesses some other properties. The same holds for truth as value: it can provide the foundation for a positive truth-feeling, which is a kind of value-feeling (cf. p. 50).[12]

2.3. The Cognitive Function of Emotions

Emotions perform an intellectual function by means of which specific properties – which require a valuation – can be apprehended. Otherwise – i.e., without taking emotions into account – the apprehension of such properties would be beyond reach. Now, we may attribute value to something valueless or, conversely, we may fail to attribute value to something which has it. A subject can attribute to a twig the value of a divining rod. In this case, a value is ascribed to the object which depends exclusively on the subject, being thus totally subjective. Contrariwise, value is objective when its valuation does not rest on false premises (judgments), as is the case with superstition. This meaning of 'objective' shows a strong analogy with the meaning of 'justified' (*berechtigt*) noted above.

Emotions are complex. When during a war I hope for the return of peace, there are some representations to which certain objects correspond and which serve as the emotion's psychological presuppositions (*psychologische Voraussetzungen*). By means of these presuppositions, certain emotions are directed towards objects, which are accordingly the objects of those emotions, and not merely the objects of representations (or of judgments) (cf. Meinong 1917, *GA* III, pp. 314-315 [1972, pp. 26-27]). Meinong calls this object a 'presuppositional object' (*Voraussetzungsgegenstand*), or a 'borrowed object' (*angeeigneter Gegenstand*). He views emotions as characterized by a double object, a presuppositional (or borrowed) object and a proper object (*Eigengegenstand*). The proper object of an emotion is not that to which it is addressed, that is, the borrowed object. When I get carried away by

10 In the following paragraphs I summarize the argument of Raspa (2020), to which I refer for more details.
11 Meinong is committed to a theory of degrees of truth varying from factuality to unfactuality.
12 Meinong's view on the relation between emotions and values has been developed by Tappolet (2000).

the sadness of a melody, it is true that sadness is a feeling, but not the sadness of the melody, because only sentient beings can feel, not objects like melodies. The sadness of a melody is the proper object which is attributed to the presuppositional object – that is, the melody – to which our emotion is addressed. The intellectual experiences of judgment and representation allow me to apprehend the melody, but not the sadness, which can be apprehended only by means of a feeling (cf. Meinong, 1917, *GA* III, pp. 324, 365-366 [1972, pp. 35, 72-73]).

2.4. Justified Emotions

'Therefore, emotions are means for knowing objects, but they cannot apprehend them alone, because knowing is always an intellectual operation. An emotion can apprehend an object only if it is connected with an intellectual experience as its psychological presupposition (1917, *GA* III, p. 403 [1972, p. 106].). We have said that the property 'true' belongs to the objective (or state of affairs) and, by extension, to the judgment. Now, if knowledge is justified true judgment, and emotions are means of knowing, one may wonder whether they, too, possess the "moment of justification" (*Berechtigungsmoment*). But what can this justification consist of? According to Meinong, the justification of emotions should be sought in non-emotional experiences, that is, in judgments. It will be a mediated justification.

If an emotion presents an object, i.e., it offers an object to thought,[13] then, when the corresponding judgment is justified, the justification can be attributed to the emotion as well. An emotion is never justified or unjustified *per se*, but it is so in relation to an object towards which it is directed, which is its presuppositional object. Nobody would say that it is justified or unjustified to feel joy, but one may be justified or unjustified in rejoicing in something or in a certain fact – one is unjustified in rejoicing in the pain of raped children. Meinong expresses this view as follows:

> If *P* is an object presented by an emotion *p*, then it is justifiable to attach the emotion *p* to an object *A* if *P* in fact applies to *A* (*dem A zukommt*), and the judgment "*A* is *P*" is therefore correct. "Correct" and "incorrect," insofar as these are said of emotions in this sense, doubtless do not mean the same as "correct" and "incorrect" in the case of judgments, but are nevertheless taken over from the latter (1917, *GA* III, pp. 414-415 [1972, p. 115]; the English translation has been modified – V.R.).

An emotion is correct or justified if the judgment which attributes the proper object of the emotion (a predicate like sadness) to its presuppositional object (for example, a subject like a melody) is justified. The analogy to the previous concept of appropriate emotion is evident. This kind of mediated justification, to which emotions may aspire, allows us to assign an objective character to emotions within the cognitive process, and to determine when an emotion is not justified (as in obvious cases of indignation). The justified or appropriate emotion is different from the emotional truth.

2.5. Emotional Truth

Although he does not deny the subjectivity of emotions, Meinong argues that, when emotional knowledge is justified, the known object (the value) is not relative to the subject, that is, it is not subjective, but, rather, objective.[14] He believes that ideals like love, justice, or truthfulness, are unanimously recognized as values, and that a similar recognition is to

13 'Presentation' (*Präsentation*) is a technical term for the act of mental experience (e. g. a representation) offering an object to thought. In Meinong's view, not only representations and judgments but also emotions can play this role. For more details on the theory of presentation, which I have here intentionally left aside, see Raspa (2013, pp. 216ff.; 2016, pp. 186ff.).

14 On Meinong's theory of values see Raspa (forthcoming).

be found in the epistemological domain. If one regards truth as value, since value is capable of attracting feelings, the same holds for truth. In common parlance, one says that truth is "felt" (cf. 1917, *GA* III, p. 418 [1972, p. 118]). "Something is called 'true' if it attracts a justified knowledge-feeling" (1968, *GA* III, p. 750 [1972, p. 169]). Knowledge-feelings have judgments as their psychological presuppositions, and it is through them that we feel the value of truth. Their respective objectives (or states of affairs) are connected to feelings that may arise, for example, when a long-hidden truth is uncovered, as would be the case if light were shed on any of the numerous mysteries in Italy's recent history (for example, the fascist massacres of Piazza Fontana and Bologna, the Ustica plane crash, the murders of Ilaria Alpi and Miran Hrovatin, and that of Giulio Regeni). The knowledge-feeling is that feeling by which we *feel* the value of truth, that is, of a justified judgment which in turn justifies the emotion connected to it. Here the notion of emotional truth, i.e., that truth which attracts a justified knowledge-feeling, takes on especial significance. How can we further develop this idea?

3. An Aesthetics of Concepts

I propose an aesthetics of concepts, which could help to clarify not only some issues about the neuro-cognitive role of emotions in dealing with beliefs and arguments, but also the mechanisms underlying some political and social phenomena.

In the beginning I said that, from a semantic point of view, two true propositions are equally true; and that, conversely, with regard to *relevance*, two true propositions are not equally relevant. The true proposition 'this pen is on the table' and the true proposition stating who killed Giulio Regeni are not equally relevant. The latter is connected to emotions, hopes, and feelings of justice that are foreign to the other. We can establish the relevance of a true proposition through our emotions, because what has value does not leave us indifferent. This claim can be accused of subjectivism, but what we have said previously about justified emotions will come to our rescue.

A theory establishes itself if it speaks not only to our thoughts, but to our heart; if we know it not only as true, but as good and beautiful. We apprehend a true value, one we are willing to commit to and possibly to die for, not only with our intellect, but also through our emotions. We discover that a truth is relevant to us through the emotions connected to it. In this sense, the *success* of a theory depends not only on the truth it encompasses, because sometimes the theory that establishes itself is simply taken as true, but it can be false; it also depends on the fact that the truth, or the proposition that one believes to be true, engages the subject emotionally.

It is important to distinguish between *being true* and *being taken as true*. We hold true and we have held true many propositions, beliefs, theories, which later turned out or may turn out to be false; however, many of these theories, in engaging us emotionally as social actors, have wrought effects on the history of mankind. This is still amply evidenced in recent times. Theories and ideas that we consider irrational, in some cases even nefarious, such as racism, neo-Nazism, and fundamentalism, lack any rational justification, but are mostly connected to emotional elements. In all these cases the ideas in question are emotionally coloured. An idea or a theory seems to establish and spread itself not only because of its truthfulness, but also due to the attraction it is able to exercise on a perceptual and emotional level.

An aesthetic of concepts is a task that lies before us. It would show (1) how some theoretically justified truths engage us emotionally; (2) how some judgments which are unjustified both theoretically and in terms of the emotions they arouse affect nonetheless the whole being of individuals. Yet two other cases are also possible: (3) one can view a falsehood as justified or, conversely, (4) a truth as unjustified, depending on the context and other factors that colour it emotionally. Such errors can persist and endure for a long time if they are connected to emotions reinforcing them. Besides, in the current climate crisis a possible strategy to have

people implement good practices is precisely an aesthetic change: those true propositions about climate change must not only be understood intellectually, but engage people emotionally, so that they implement the resulting good practices not just because they have to (as when taking a medicine), but because they like doing it.

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