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Do Affective Desires Provide Reasons for Action?

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This paper evaluates the claim that some desires provide reasons in virtue of their connection with conscious affective experiences like feelings of attraction or aversion. I clarify the nature of affective desires and several distinct ways in which affective desires might provide reasons. Against accounts proposed by Ruth Chang, Declan Smithies and Jeremy Weiss, I motivate doubts that it is the *phenomenology* of affective experiences that explains their normative or rational significance. I outline an alternative approach that centralises the *function* of such experiences.

Keywords: Affect, Attraction, Aversion, Desire, Rationality, Reasons

1 Introduction

It is widely assumed that desires can contribute to what it is rational for one to do. Some desires rationalise action in virtue of reasons on which they are based. For instance, suppose I learn that the restaurant next door serves the best falafel in town, and I form a desire to dine there for that reason. If

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I were to act on this desire, my action would be rationalised by that reason. Some philosophers have argued that there are desires that rationalise actions without being based on reasons. Some desires, it is claimed, have the power to *provide* reasons. This paper focuses on arguments by Ruth Chang and, more recently, by Declan Smithies and Jeremy Weiss, that claim that such desires provide reasons without being based on reasons in virtue of having an *affective* nature.

§2 clarifies the operative notion of desire and outlines the two main accounts of affective desire. §3 clarifies the claim that desires are capable of 'providing' reasons by distinguishing several distinct formulations of the thesis. I then apply them to extant accounts of affective desires to clarify the sense in which such desires provide reasons. §4 evaluates a key argument by Chang that affective desires constitute normative reasons for action. §5 motivates scepticism concerning explanations of why desires are rationally significant that appeal to their conscious phenomenology. I outline an alternative approach that centralises the function of such experiences.

2 What are Affective Desires?

This section distinguishes desire *proper* from the more generic notion of a 'pro-attitude' (§2.1). I then turn to consider two extant accounts of affective desire developed in Chang (2004) and Smithies and Weiss (2019) (§2.2).

2.1 Pro-Attitude vs. Desire Proper

The term 'desire' has a broad and narrow sense. In its broadest sense, 'desire' simply refers to any state of motivation (Nagel, 1970; Schueler, 1995). It is synonymous with the term of art 'pro-attitude' (Davidson, 1963) and may include urges, preferences, intentions, and controversially, evaluative beliefs. In the philosophical literature, there is a narrower sense of 'desire' that picks out a proper subset of motivational states. A dominant *action*-based account claims that desires are dispositions to engage in goal-directed behaviour (Stalnaker, 1984; Smith, 1994). As we will shortly consider, *affect*-based

accounts claim that desire is a mental state that essentially involves a certain kind of affective *experience* (Chang, 2004; Strawson, 1994; Smithies and Weiss, 2019). The literature also contains other views that centralise other aspects of desire like pleasure (Schiffer, 1976), evaluative judgment (Gregory, 2018), attention (Scanlon, 1998), their quasi-perceptual role (Stampe, 1987), their role in reward-based learning (Schroeder, 2004) or some combination of these elements.

However we fix this narrower sense of 'desire', the important point is that in the narrow sense, it does not immediately follow from the fact that an agent was motivated to bring about an outcome P, that she *ipso facto* desired that P (Schueler, 1995, p. 29). To determine if she was motivated by a desire, we need to determine if she was motivated by a particular kind of pro-attitude, for example, one that involved affective phenomenology. To keep things clear, I will reserve the term 'desire' for this narrower notion, though I will remain neutral on what kind of functional role fixes its extension.

2.2 Affective Experiences and Desire

It is hard to deny that our experiences of a great many of our desires are affectively coloured; often, the objects of our desires are presented to us as enticing or alluring. This section considers two accounts of a subset of desires that centralises this affective aspect of desire.

Chang (2004) argues that some desires are what she calls 'affective desires': 'non-cognitive states essentially involving attraction to their objects without reference to any cognitive or quasi-cognitive element' (Chang, 2004, p. 68). Attractions are 'intentional states: that is, they involve having an *attitude about some content*' (Chang, 2004, p. 69). What is distinctive about these affective desires is that they 'essentially involve some phenomenological feel' which she describes as involving finding what one desires appealing or attractive (*ibid.*). Chang differentiates between *feature-bound* and *feature-free* attractions. Feature-bound affective desires involve attractions to 'particular features of an object; [for instance,] one is attracted to the creaminess of the banana', whereas feature-free desires are 'desires for *the*

object itself but not under any particular description' (Chang, 2004, p. 80).

Smithies and Weiss (2019) defend a theory targeted specifically at what they call 'basic' desires: desires one has 'not in virtue of having any other belief or desire' (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, p. 45). Basic desires are 'dispositions to cause the phenomenal character of affective experiences of desire' (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, p. 49). Smithies & Weiss appeal to two classes of affective experience that they take to individuate basic desires, 'feelings of attraction or aversion' (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, p. 27). Like Chang's affective desires, affective experiences of attraction or aversion are experiential episodes that are phenomenally conscious and *intentional*. Moreover, they are *valenced* by which they mean that '[affective experiences] represent their intentional objects in a *positive or negative way*' (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, 29, emphasis added).

It is worthwhile registering some important differences between the two views. The first concerns their ontology. At least colloquially, 'desire' and 'want' can be used to refer not just to standing dispositions, but to psychological *events* or *processes* (cf. Goldman, 1970). For Chang, affective desires are identical with episodes of attraction. Whereas for Smithies and Weiss, basic desires are *dispositions* to have such affective experiences. The second concerns the intentional objects of affective experiences of desire. Chang claims that affective desires may be directed at individuals (e.g. a sweater), properties (e.g. the sweater's pinkness) and act-types (e.g. wearing pink). Smithies and Weiss, however, take affective experiences to involve valenced responses to 'the prospect' of performing certain acts which they indicate should be understood as a kind of response to conscious *thoughts* that concern ϕ-ing, e.g. feeling positive when imagining oneself wearing pink (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, p. 39).

Finally, it is important to distinguish affective experience of desire from hedonic phenomena like pleasure or displeasure to see how it evades the kinds of objections facing hedonic accounts of desire-based reasons (Schiffer, 1976). It is possible on Smithies and Weiss' view that one can be attracted to the prospect of ϕ-ing even if you would not find it pleasurable were you to ϕ. For example, one might be attracted to the prospect of tasting a

durian fruit even if one would find the flavour unpleasant (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, p. 44). Moreover, it is not the case that states of attraction or aversion are, respectively, pleasurable or displeasurable states to be in *per se*. As Smithies and Weiss point out, sometimes romantic attraction may be a displeasurable state to endure (*ibid.*).

3 In What Sense Might Affective Desires Provide Reasons?

In this section, I clarify the claim that affective desires provide reasons. I begin by distinguishing several distinct, though possibly interconnected, senses in which mental states might *provide* reasons. To clarify this claim, we need to say something about the operative notion of reason.

Let us start by introducing a common tripartite distinction between normative, motivating and explanatory reasons (cf. Alvarez, 2010). A *normative* reason for an agent A to act in way ϕ is a consideration that favours A's ϕ-ing. As rational agents, we aim to act in accordance with the balance of apparent normative reasons. If we act in way ϕ in light of an apparent reason R that genuinely favours ϕ-ing, then R constitutes one's *motivating* reason. An agent's motivating reason for ϕ is the reason in the light of which she ϕ-ed.[1] Whilst motivating reasons can explain why someone acted in a certain way ϕ, not all explanatory reasons for action constitute motivating reasons. For instance, while the fact that A suffers from a hormonal imbalance explains why A ϕ-ed, it does not constitute the reason in the light of which A ϕ-ed, what would be A's motivating reason.

With this in mind, what is it for a mental state to provide one with a reason? The claim that mental states provide one with normative reasons is ambiguous between two claims (cf. Bain, 2013, fn.37; Schroeder, 2007,

[1] Notice that on this construal, motivating reasons are typically considerations that pertain to how the world is. This non-psychologistic characterisation is defended in Alvarez (2010), Dancy (2000), *contra* Davidson (1963) and Smith (1994). This is not to say that facts about mental states cannot provide motivating reasons. For example, one's belief that the CIA is spying on one can be one's belief for visiting the psychiatrist (Hyman, 1999, p. 444).

p. 21):

Presentation A mental state M provides agent A with a reason to respond in way ϕ if there is some normative reason for A to ϕ R such that M *presents* A with R.

Constitution A mental state M provides A with a reason to respond in way ϕ if the fact that A has mental state M *constitutes* a normative reason there is for A to ϕ.

It is plausible that there are mental states that provide reasons in each of these two distinct senses. For instance, on some accounts of perception, my perceiving that there is an apple on the table before me provides me with a reason to believe so simply by presenting me with a reason to form the belief, *viz.* the fact there is an apple on the table.[2] Some mental states constitute reasons; for instance, if I experience an unpleasant pain in my leg, then my pain provides me with a reason because it is the fact that I am suffering this unpleasant experience that is the reason to consume some painkillers.

There is, however, one further way in which the notion of 'providing' reasons could be glossed owing to the notion of a 'subjective reason' employed by one of the accounts we will shortly consider. According to Smithies and Weiss:

> [Subjective reasons for an agent A in context c are] facts that contribute towards explaining normative facts about what it's *rational* for [A] to do [in c]...
>
> [W]hat it is *rational* [for A] to do [is]... how it makes sense for him to act in light of the limited information in his possession, rather than the full information. (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, 33, emphasis added).

Note that 'subjective reasons' are not necessarily *normative* reasons. Whilst a belief that the room is on fire would rationalise fleeing, it is *that*

[2] This view about what reasons perception provides is not uncontroversial; for discussion, see Schnee (2016).

the room is on fire that favours one's fleeing, not one's believing it to be so. What Smithies and Weiss call 'subjective reasons' are more aptly labelled 'rationalisers': facts about an agent that explain the rationality of certain actions. There is thus a further way of construing the claim about providing reasons:

Rationalisation A mental state M provides A with a 'subjective' reason to respond in way ϕ if the fact that A has mental state M constitutes a fact of the kind that contributes to an explanation of its being rational for A to ϕ.

We can see now that depending on which notion of provision one has in mind, there are varying constraints on what counts as a successful explanation of why a particular kind of mental state provides a reason. Before evaluating the role of affective phenomenology proposed by various authors, two clarifications are in order.

The first concerns a background assumption about the relationship between rationality and reasons. For present purposes, I will grant the plausible premise that, *inter alia,* rationality requires responsiveness to one's apparent reasons, ideally, possessed *normative* reasons (e.g. Lord, 2014; Alvarez, 2018), though the tightness of the relationship between rationality and normativity has been disputed (Broome, 2018). As we will see, one of the authors we will consider relies on such a connection (§4.1).

The second concerns the broader philosophical significance of the question of how, if at all, *affective* desires provide reasons for action. There is ongoing philosophical debate about how intrinsic desires that are not based on reasons can rationalise action. It is unclear how prominent a role affective experiences play. Progress on this question should interest even defenders of rival explanations because if the arguments shortly considered are compelling, this suggests that there could be more than one feature of desire in virtue of which it is rationally significant.

4 Do Affective Desires Constitute Reasons?

This section considers an argument due to Chang that affective desires both *present* and *constitute* normative reasons because they appear to impose rational constraints in cases of choice between tied options. I argue that this inference is unmotivated because there are no less plausible competing explanations of these constraints that do not require that affective desires constitute reasons.

According to well-known value-based accounts of practical reasons (e.g. Raz, 1986; Dancy, 2000; Parfit, 2011), all reasons for action are 'provided by facts about the value of something, where being valuable is not simply a matter of being desired' (Chang, 2004, p. 57). Against this view, Chang argues that *affective* desires provide reasons to act grounded entirely in the fact that one has the desire. To motivate this, Chang considers intuitive judgements about the rationality of choice and action in 'tied' cases in which a subject faces a choice between two 'rationally eligible' (Raz, 1999, Ch.2–3) options, i.e. options backed by sufficient but inconclusive reasons. Such situations are quotidian; take for instance whether or not to select a banana or a pear to have for breakfast (Raz, 1998, p. 62), or to take one of two desirable paths home (Scanlon, 1998, p. 48). Chang argument focuses on a starker case analogous to Buridan's Ass in which a subject is faced with two *identical* options:

> [S]uppose that [Buridan's ass] 'feels like' the hay on the left, not because it is to the left or for any feature for it– he just wants that bale. If he is attracted to the bale on the left but goes for the one on the right, *surely he would not be doing what he has most reason to do. He has most reason to eat the bale on the left since all other reasons are evenly matched and he is attracted to that bale.* (Chang, 2004, p.80, emphasis added)

But why should we think that if one were to act against an affective desire between two evenly matched options, one would 'not be doing what [one] has most reason to do' (*ibid.*)? Chang writes:

> If he goes left, his action can be rationalised by pointing out that he felt like having the bale on the left. If he goes right, *we would need some explanation for this puzzling act*; what reason does he have to go right given that he would enjoy each of the two identical bales equally and feels like having the one on the left? *What we would be looking for is a reason to go right that counteracts his reason to go left provided by the fact that he feels like it*... The fact that one is attracted to something can *per se* provide a reason to go for it when all other reasons are evenly matched. (*ibid*, p.81 emphasis added)

The thought here is that it is rational to pursue the option one 'feels like' pursuing and puzzling not to. If, as Chang assumes, what is needed to explain acting against one's affection is the recognition of a countervailing reason, then we should accept that affective desires weigh on choice as an apparent reason for action does. Before taking a closer look at this argument, I want to clarify the sense in which Chang thinks conscious attractions can '*per se* provide a reason' (Chang, 2004, p.81). Chang makes three interconnected claims of provision: one's affective desire to ϕ *rationalises* ϕ-ing to some degree by *constituting* a reason there is for one to ϕ. Being a conscious state, the agent is aware of the desire as an apparent *tie-breaking* reason to ϕ. According to Chang, A acts in way ϕ 'for the [motivating] reason that he feels like having it' (Chang, 2004, p.82).

4.1 A Closer Look at Tie-Breaking Cases

Chang's reasoning contains two premises based on seeming rational constraints imposed given a choice between X and Y at time t_1 where one is attracted to X but not Y:

A. It would be rational if the agent chooses X over Y at t_2.

B. If the agent were to act against her attraction by choosing Y over X at time t_2, then she acts in a way that is puzzling and requires explanation.

From (A) and (B), she concludes:

C. The fact that the agent is attracted to X and not Y constitutes a normative reason of which she is aware that favours her choosing X over Y at t_1.

Let us grant (A) and (B) and focus on whether we have conclusive reason to accept (C) based on this argument. Without loss of generality, we will focus on Raz's case of a choice between a banana and a pear.

The key to resisting this argument is to explain why (B) in particular can hold without (C). So we are looking to explain why it would be puzzling to pick the banana over the pear without supposing that this is due to one's acting against an apparent reason constituted by one's attraction to the pear. I suggest that the feature of this act that is puzzling and demands explanation is that it appears to evidence a disruption of normal mental functioning.[3] Consider a rational subject A who asserts her belief that P and $P \rightarrow Q$, yet when asked what follows, fails to form the belief that Q. This failure strikes us as puzzling and requires some kind of mitigating explanation, for instance, a countervailing belief in the unreliability of one's cognitive faculties, or else a mitigating explanatory reason like tiredness or inattention. Here we have an unexplained failure to form a belief that is *prima facie* evidence for (temporary) psychological dysfunction or impairment. Similarly, failing to respond to an attraction to the pear with no apparent countervailing belief is *prima facie* evidence of a disruption of normal mental functioning.[4]

Now it might be objected by Chang that this explanation would entail that the attraction *does* constitute a reason; for why should a lack of countervailing belief matter if not to counter-balance an apparent *reason* provided by one's desire? This objection equivocates between *explanatory*

[3]The sense of 'normal' here is the teleological one employed in Millikan (1984); further discussion to follow in §5.2.

[4]See also Gert (2009). What our diagnoses have in common is to block the inference about desires providing reasons but whereas Gert agrees with Chang that to act against one's desire is irrational and gives a 'reliabilist' explanation, I do not endorse this holding instead that (B) can be explained simply in terms of being prima facie evidence of functional impairment. Gert does not give an explanation of why Chang makes this inference which I will do shortly.

and *normative* reasons. It is questionable whether (B) holds only if one's attraction to the pear constitutes a normative reason. This is because it is not, in general, true that it would be puzzling not to ϕ because one is in mental state M only if M constitutes a *normative* reason to ϕ. To see this, return to the example of puzzling failed inference. I take it that it would be puzzling if A did not form the belief that Q given A's expression of her belief that P and $P \rightarrow Q$. But whatever reason one might give to explain this, the failure to form the belief does not entail that A's *believing* that P and $P \rightarrow Q$ is a reason to believe that Q as opposed to the truth of those *contents* (Alvarez, 2010; Dancy, 2000). The key point here is that explanatory reasons of why it would be rational to ϕ (e.g. the presence of a belief or a state of attraction) are not necessarily *normative* reasons to ϕ.

My proposed explanation, of course, raises the question of *why* it would be *prima facie* evidence of disrupted functioning not to act on an attraction. To answer this question, I consider an account of the function of attractions and the mechanisms that produce them in §5.2. For now, the point I want press is simply the formal one that this kind of explanation of (B) is no less plausible than (C). So we can explain why it would be puzzling not to pick the pear without supposing that this is due to one's acting against an apparent reason constituted by one's attraction to the pear.[5]

To be clear then, there are two main ways of interpreting the reasoning contained in the quoted passage. If (C) is supposed to follow *deductively* from (A) and (B), then the argument is invalid. More plausibly, if (C) is instead intended as the *best explanation* of (A) and (B), then the main point I hope to have established is that we lack reasons to think that (C) receives *greater abductive support* than the alternative I have suggested that is

[5] An anonymous reviewer suggests a response on behalf of Chang that a subject who chooses the banana against her affective desire is *foolish* and that Chang is better equipped to explain why. I contest that choosing the banana would be obviously foolish, that is, lacking good sense or judgment. After all, in choosing the banana, *she does so for good and sufficient reasons* (though reasons that do not decisively weigh in favour of the banana over the pear) whereas paradigmatic cases of foolish choices typically involve choosing for no good reason, or against the balance of apparent reasons. While Chang wishes to suggest that our agent is in the latter situation, to do so simply based on the intuition would be an over-description of it. As I explain, a deflationary explanation can be given.

neutral on whether desires constitute (apparent) normative reasons (further details of which to come in §5.2).[6]

5 Why do Affective Desires Rationalise Actions?

This section considers an explanation of how affective desires might *rationalise* certain actions. According to Smithies and Weiss, it is the *conscious character* of affective experiences of desire that explains why such mental states *rationalise* actions. I argue that there are reasons to doubt this claim (§5.1). To be clear, I am not targeting the general claim that affective desires provide reasons *tout court*, but that they do so in virtue of their 'phenomenological feel' (Chang, 2004, p. 69). To motivate some doubts about it, I will consider cases in which intuitions about the rational significance of attractions are sensitive to etiological effects in an apparent asymmetry with other mental states that more plausibly rationalise due to their phenomenology.[7]

Smithies and Weiss hold that some desires provide practical reasons in the sense that they *rationalise* action without being based on reasons. They argue that desires rationalise action in this way *only insofar* as they comprise dispositions to undergo affective experiences of desire such as states of attraction and aversion (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, p. 27). '[It is] extremely plausible', they write, 'that some affective experiences are capable of providing us with reasons for action. If you feel attracted to turning on radios, just for its own sake, then you thereby have some reason for turning them on' (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, p. 37).

[6] Tanyi (2011) rejects Chang's arguments by claiming that desires do not ground reasons, explaining Chang's cases by appeal to 'higher-order' reasons to do with efficiency, self-realisation or spontaneity that allow one to rationally treat facts about one's desires as tie-breakers (Tanyi, 2011, p. 221). My response is much less concessive than Tanyi's. Tanyi follows Chang in taking (A) and (B) to be explained by the existence of some reason, diverging only in appealing not to desire but some 'higher-order' reason. I claim here that it is simply unmotivated to move from (A) and (B) to a claim about what reasons obtain without further argumentation.

[7] The style of argument I wish to press is related to arguments against the claim that perceptual experiences immediately justify beliefs in virtue of their phenomenal character. These arguments appeal to the fact that the epistemic status of beliefs formed on the basis of perceptual experiences can be 'downgraded' due to epistemically compromising etiologies (cf. Siegel, 2013; Teng, 2018)

Why is this? Smithies and Weiss claim that it is due to their introspectable features intrinsic to what it is like to enjoy such experiences, *viz.* their 'phenomenal valence and... phenomenal content' (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, pp. 30, 38). The fact that such features constitute such experience's phenomenal character explains why they satisfy what they call the 'reflective access constraint' on reasons according to which 'one has a reason to ϕ only if it is epistemically rational for one to believe on the basis of reflection that one has a reason to ϕ' (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, p. 34). This commits them to the following:

Affective Phenomenal Rationalisers (APR) *A*'s being attracted/averse to ϕ-ing contributes to its being rational for *A* to ϕ (or refrain from ϕ -ing) in virtue of the conscious character of such experiences.

Smithies and Weiss distinguish between desires and affective *experiences* of desire. Basic desires, they claim, rationalise because they are dispositions to have such experiences. Given (APR), a desire to eat tomatoes, for instance, *also* satisfies the reflective access constraint because 'I can know by reflection how I'm disposed to feel about tasting tomatoes... I can just manifest the disposition by thinking about tasting tomatoes and considering how I feel about it.' (Smithies and Weiss, 2019, p. 39).

5.1 Etiological Downgrade and an Asymmetry

The aspect of Smithies and Weiss' account I want to contest is not their reflective access constraint (on which I remain neutral), but their specific *phenomenology-based explanation* of why affective desires can rationalise actions. To do so, I motivate some counterexamples to (APR). These take the form of cases in which subjects enjoy affective experiences of desire without rational significance owing to factors *extrinsic* to the conscious character of such experiences. Take a subject who forms an attraction to acquiring saucers of mud as a result of brain device installed to interfere with the normal operation of the mechanisms whose function it is to give rise to and

regulate such affective experiences.[8] Alternatively, consider a professor who forms strong occurrent aversions to students of some particular skin colour due to feelings of racial hatred. In both cases, we are to imagine that A's present attractions/aversions are the products of a process that produces attractions/aversion in ways that do not track states of affairs that would be of value/disvalue to bring about. Following Siegel (2013), we can say that her attractions have a *checkered* etiology. If (APR) is true, her conscious attraction to saucers of mud is sufficient to make it rational for her to try to do so, absent defeaters. Yet this does not seem right: the checkered etiology of A's attractions now neutralises whatever rational support being attracted to an action possessed.[9]

For a less fanciful example, consider addictive desires caused by substances that interfere with the dopamine system. Holton and Berridge (2016) argues that in such cases, strong attractions to take drugs are formed in ways that increasingly become disconnected from anticipated experiences of pleasure or valuable outcomes. Given these degraded connections, Holton and Berridge plausibly suggest that an addictive desire is one formed due to the 'malfunctioning of a normally rational system for creating intrinsic desires'. This, they claim, is as 'clear a case of an irrational intrinsic desire as one is ever likely to find' (Holton and Berridge, 2016, p. 168).

The present argument does not depend on the claim that the attraction caused by addictive drugs is irrational, nor the sub-personal processes that lead to the production of such attractions. My argument only depends on its being plausible that the influences discussed can be counted as disrupting the normal functioning of the conative system in such a way that the attractions it produces will be downgraded below the baseline required for rational

[8] It is important that this interference involves skewing the normal operation of these mechanisms whose function it is to regulate affect in light of experience-based learning (discussion to follow in §5.2), as opposed to destroying/overriding it altogether. Following Siegel (2013), it is the former class of etiologies involving putatively irrational processes that I focus on, rather than the later which Siegel takes to be arational or 'zaplike' etiologies (Siegel, 2013, p. 700).

[9] Of course, not all influences on perceptual experiences are epistemically compromising, e.g. expertise.

significance.[10]

We can thus argue as follows:

> **P1**: If (APR) is true, then it is rational for A to ϕ if A enjoys the experience of being attracted to ϕ-ing, absent defeating conditions.
>
> **P2**: But possible states of attraction to ϕ-ing with checkered etiologies sharing otherwise identical phenomenology with attractions *without* checkered etiologies do not rationalise ϕ-ing.
>
> **C:** (APR) is false.

Given that we have no reason to doubt that the nature of the attractions to saucers of mud differs in their intrinsic properties– *viz.* phenomenal content and valence– to an episode of attraction without the checkered etiology, we should be sceptical about whether features intrinsic to the phenomenal character of affective experiences like attractions are *sufficient* to make it rational to pursue what one is attracted to.

I want to emphasise that the argument against (APR) does not flow from a general scepticism about the rational significance of conscious experiences. To see this, consider an asymmetry regarding intuitions about analogous cases concerning pain. In normal cases, pain's unpleasantness makes up a core part of pain phenomenology. The fact that one feels pain *constitutes*

[10] The perceptual analogue of this intuition is contested (e.g. Pryor, 2000, p. 523; Fumerton, 2013). Siegel (2013) mounts several auxiliary arguments in support of epistemic downgrade. While it is outside the scope of the paper to defend analogues of these arguments, there is good reason to think that one has a better chance of success. Siegel (2013, p. 707) claims that just as doxastically unjustified beliefs transmit their 'ill-foundedness' to other beliefs that are based on them, a perceptual belief based on an experience with a checkered etiology will not receive immediate justification since the perceptual belief will inherit an analogous ill-foundedness. But Fumerton (2013) argues that belief but not perception can transmit ill-foundedness because beliefs can *themselves be irrational*, whereas perceptual experiences cannot. The fact that Siegel (2013) seems to agree makes it more difficult to defend the argument (though this is reconsidered in Siegel, 2018). Pace Smithies and Weiss, there are persuasive arguments that intrinsic desires and the processes that lead to their production can be evaluated for rationality (cf. Railton, 2012). For this reason, there is more argumentative manoeuvring possible in the present case to suggest the argument has a better chance of success.

a reason to alleviate it, a course of action it *rationalises* in virtue of its phenomenology. In contrast with the above examples, the phenomenology of pain *is* sufficient to constitute a reason and a rationaliser even in analogous cases of 'checkered etiology' e.g. where an unpleasant pain experience is caused by some central nervous system neuropathy (cf. Bain, 2017, p. 11). The fact that the normative and rational significance of affective experiences of desire can be undercut due to extrinsic factors should give us reason to doubt whether affective desires provide reasons *in virtue of* their conscious character.

5.2 What of the Rational Significance of Affective Desire?

How might we explain the rational significance of affective desires if not due to their phenomenal character? I wish to end this section by briefly considering a rival approach. This approach explains why affective desires contribute to what it is rational to do by focussing on the *function* of episodes of attraction or aversion, in particular, their role in regulating motivation in adaptive ways.

A plausible account of desire in the literature is due to Railton (2012) according to which desire is a '*dynamic* functional state' (Railton, 2012, p. 36) involving both motivational and affective components. On his view, affective states play two key roles.

First, attraction *elicits* motivation, e.g. seeing someone quench their thirst with a cold beer sets the enticing end of drinking a cold beer before the mind, leading one to be motivated to buy a beer. Second, attraction *regulates* motivation by setting up positive expectations. Being attracted to something involves 'attendant expectations... It thus sets us up to notice discrepancies—negative or positive—between how things seemed in the favourable representation and how we actually found them' (Railton, 2012, p. 35). Through the operation of affective mechanisms, subsequent motivation is regulated: learning that an end is worse than affectively expected thus will lower the likelihood of future elicitation of the motivational component of desire.

It is plausible that it is an *etiological* function of such mechanisms to regulate motivation in response to features of outcomes that covary with certain prudential reasons related to survival and reproduction (e.g. sweet flavours, warm surroundings, social contact) (Railton, 2012, p. 41). What we find attractive/aversive is the result of mechanisms that operate to ensure that motivation is regulated in prudentially good-conducive ways when functioning normally under normal conditions.[11]

If this view is plausible, we can explain why attractions contribute to rationalising explanations of action in terms of rational *entitlements* generated by the normal functioning of such systems. Such entitlements would constitute the practical analogue of the notion of epistemic entitlements developed by Burge (2003).[12] To act with one's attractions on such a view would be to act in a rationally warranted fashion without, as per Chang, holding that one's state of attraction constitutes one's *justification* for that action. The function of such attractions to elicit motivation explains why we should hold, as suggested in §4, that unexplained resistance to one's attraction is *prima facie* evidence of some disruption of normal functioning. Moreover, this view explains why cases of affective experiences with checkered etiology result in downgrade: both cases involve experiences of attraction that are the result of mechanisms that no longer function normally, and hence no longer regulate affect in the normally good-conducive manner.

[11] The notions of normal functioning and normal conditions here are the standard ones invoked by etiological accounts of function. The 'normal functioning' of a mechanism is how the mechanism operated in producing the effect for which it was selected for. 'Normal conditions' for the operation of a mechanism are the types of conditions that historically obtained for normal functioning. I include as such conditions the relevant mechanism's being configured to innately find a certain set of outcomes attractive (e.g. sweet flavours, warmth etc.). See Schroeder (2004, pp. 146–7) and Shaw (forth.).

[12] The relationship between such entitlements and rationality is developed in the work of Christopher Peacocke (cf. Peacocke, 2002; Peacocke, 2003). A full treatment of this is outside the scope of this paper. I develop my account of such entitlements and its application in the case of desire in Shaw (ms.) and also explore an alternative reasons-based account in Shaw (forth.).

6 Conclusion

The goal of this paper has been to clarify and evaluate the idea that some desires provide reasons without being based on reasons because of their connection with affective experiences.

I clarified at least three senses in which such desire might provide reasons in order to clarify extant accounts of affective desire in the literature (§3). I argued that a key argument by Chang that desires *constitute* normative reasons can be plausibly resisted because its conclusion is not more plausible as an explanation of the intuitions Chang canvasses concerning 'tie-breaking' cases than the one I provided in §5.2 (§4). I provided a general argument to be sceptical of an explanation of affective desire's rational significance that appeals solely to their phenomenology (§5.1). Finally, I fleshed out an alternative strategy one might have to account for the rational significance of affective desires that draws on the proper function of such desires and the mechanisms that regulate them (§5.2).

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