

Value and emotions

(8471 words)

Keywords

Evaluative concepts, fitting attitude analysis, affective concepts, thick concepts, emotions, perceptual experiences, the perceptual theory of emotions

Abstract

Evaluative concepts and emotions appear closely connected. According to a prominent account, this relation can be expressed by propositions of the form ‘something is admirable if and only if feeling admiration is appropriate in response to it’. The first section discusses various interpretations of such ‘Value-Emotion Equivalences’, for example the Fitting Attitude Analysis, and it offers a plausible way to read them. The main virtue of the proposed way to read them is that it is well-supported by a promising account of emotions, namely the Perceptual Theory of Emotions, which emphasises the analogies between emotions and sensory perceptual experiences. The second section considers a worry about whether concepts such as *admirable* are really evaluative. It is maintained that even though the arguments used to show that thick terms and concepts are not inherently evaluative can be transposed to affective concepts, these arguments can be resisted. So there is no need to abandon the intuitive claim that affective concepts are inherently evaluative.

If one thinks of the *admirable* and admiration, of the *shameful* and shame, or of the disgusting and disgust, it is difficult to deny that there must be close ties between values, on the one hand, and emotions, on the other hand. Because one can distinguish between evaluative concepts, evaluative judgements, evaluative properties and evaluative facts, and also because several types of relation can be envisaged, the question of what relation hold between values and emotions ramifies into several distinct questions.

Consider evaluative judgements. One option is to claim that such judgements are reducible to, constituted by, or identical to emotions.¹ This option has been attractive to proponents of Non-Cognitivism, the view that evaluative, or more generally normative, judgements do not have the function of predicating evaluative properties and thus fail to be truth-assessable, or at least fail to be truth-assessable in any substantial way. As a view about judgements, Non-Cognitivism is distinct from, but congenial to two important but

¹ See Jesse Prinz (2007) for the claim that moral judgements are what he calls ‘sentiments’, that is, dispositions to undergo a number of emotions, such as shame, guilt and resentment.

controversial doctrines in metaethics which consider emotions to be central to ethics: Emotivism (or Expressivism), the semantic thesis that the function of evaluative sentences is to express emotions (Stevenson 1937; Ayer 1952), and Projectivism, the view that the evaluative is a projection of our emotions onto the world (Blackburn 1984).

In general, views such as Non-Cognitivism, Emotivism and Projectivism are premised on two assumptions about the nature of emotions: a) emotions lack cognitive content; and b) emotions are essentially motivational states, so that by establishing a link to emotion, the motivational power of evaluative judgements, sentences or facts is supposed to be accounted for (see Ayer 1952, for instance). The recent consensus in emotion theory is that there is ground to question these assumptions and to adopt a broadly cognitive account of emotions.

Interestingly, one of the main accounts of emotions proposes an ontology of emotions that amounts to a mirror-image of Non-Cognitivism. This view, Judgementalism, thus holds that emotions are, or necessarily require, evaluative judgements (Solomon 1976; Nussbaum 2001). Fear would thus be, or necessarily require, the judgement that what one fears is fearsome or dangerous. Another possibility is to posit causal relations between evaluative judgements and emotions. It is plausible to hold that emotions causally influence evaluative judgements, such as when your anger gets you to assess your opponent negatively. However, in at least some cases, it is clear that the causal relation goes the other way around: evaluative, or more generally normative, judgements play a causal role in the arousal of emotions. It should be noted that the two claims are not necessarily incompatible. For instance, your anger might be caused by the judgement that someone slighted you, but it might also influence how you assess that person. A further kind of relation lies at the level of epistemology. According to an influential account of emotions that stresses the analogies with sensory experiences, the so-called Perceptual Theory of Emotions (Meinong 1917; de Sousa 1987; Tappolet 2000; Goldie 2001) emotions would allow agents to be aware of evaluative properties in the same way as colour experiences allow us to be aware of colours. On the basis of this, it has been claimed that emotions at least *prima facie* justify evaluative judgements. However, it has also been argued that *vice versa* evaluative judgements justify emotions,

a claim that does not sit well together with the thesis that emotions are in a position to justify evaluative judgments.

These are but the bare outlines of the most striking relations that can be taken to hold between evaluative judgements and emotions. In this paper, I want to focus on a distinct but related topic, that is, the relation between evaluative concepts and emotions. The central question addressed here is that of the relation between concepts such as *admirable* and *disgusting* and emotions such as admiration and disgust.

A suggestion that has been prominent in recent debates is that the relation between the evaluative and emotions can be expressed in the form of propositions like the following: something is admirable if and only if feeling admiration is appropriate in response to it, something is shameful if and only if shame is appropriate with respect to it, something is disgusting if and only if disgust is appropriate with respect to it.² Such propositions, which I shall call ‘Value-Emotion Equivalences’, raise the question of how to interpret them, something that needs to be settled before assessing their plausibility. A first question is how to read the bi-conditional. According to advocates of what has become known as the Fitting Attitude Analysis, the equivalences consist in conceptual analyses of the relevant evaluative concepts. But as we shall see this is not the only possibility. Moreover, what needs to be specified is what the relevant kind of attitude is supposed to be and what it is for such an attitude to be appropriate. These issues will be discussed in section 1, the aim of which is to present a plausible version of the Value-Emotion Equivalences. The following section turns to an important worry regarding Value-Emotion Equivalences. In general, advocates of such equivalences assume that concepts such as *admirable* or *disgusting* are evaluative. However, in the light of debates about whether thick concepts are evaluative, it is reasonable to wonder whether concepts such as *admirable* or *shameful* really are evaluative concepts. This worry raises the deep question of what it is about evaluative concepts that make them evaluative. Before turning to this issue, let us have a closer look at the alleged relation between evaluative concepts and emotions.

² As Zimmerman (this volume) notes, such propositions can be traced back at least to Franz Brentano (1889), who wrote: ‘We call something good if the love that relates to it is correct. The good in the more general sense of the word is what has to be loved with correct love’ (1889: 19). More recently, see, among others, Broad 1930; Ross 1930; Ewing 1947; Wiggins 1976; McDowell 1985; Chisholm 1986; Lemos 1994; Anderson 1993; Scanlon 1998; D’Arms and Jacobson 2000; and Zimmerman 2001.

1. Value-Emotion Equivalences

As I said, it is difficult to deny that concepts such as *admirable*, *shameful* or *disgusting*, which I will call ‘affective concepts’ in order to be as neutral as possible with respect to the question whether such concepts are evaluative, have a tight connection to emotions. The foremost reason why this is so is simply because such concepts, of which there are a great many, are picked out by terms that are lexically connected to emotion terms. Thus, on the positive side, you have *admirable*, *hopeful*, *pride-worthy*, *lovable*, *respectable*, *awesome* and *amusing*, whereas on the negative side, there are *shameful*, *disgusting*, *contemptible*, *embarrassing*, *fearsome*, *frightening*, etc. Not all emotions have a lexically derived affective concept – consider anger or guilt, for instance – but many do, and when there is no natural language term, it is always possible to designate the relevant concept by a complex expression. Thus, things can be considered worthy of your anger or of your guilt.

A further point that attests to the intimacy of affective concepts and emotions is that on most accounts the formal objects of emotions are picked out by affective concepts. It is in terms of the formal objects of emotions that the appropriateness conditions of emotions are specified.³ For example, most would agree that the admirable is the formal object of admiration, in the sense that an episode of admiration is appropriate on the condition that what you admire is genuinely admirable. Put in terms of concepts, one could say that the concept of the admirable picks out the formal object of, or sets the standard for, the emotion of admiration.

Finally, and relatedly, emotions and the properties that correspond to affective concepts, if there are such properties, share a number of structural traits:

³ According to Kenny, who is responsible for introducing the concept in contemporary emotion theory, the formal object of a state is the object under that description which must apply to it if it is possible to be in this state with respect to it (1963: 132). He claims that the description of the formal object of an emotion involves a reference to belief: one has to believe that something is dangerous in order to feel fear. In recent times, however, it has become common to claim that the formal object of an emotion is a property. Thus, de Sousa writes that ‘[t]he formal object of fear – the norm defined by fear for its own appropriateness – is the Dangerous’ (2002: 251). More generally, see Teroni 2007.

- a) *Degrees*. Both emotions and what can be called ‘affective properties’ allow for degrees.⁴ An interpretation of Einstein on the Beach can be more or less admirable, and of course, you can admire it more or less, with more or less intensity.
- b) *Valence*. Both affective properties and emotions have valence. They are both divided into two groups, which are described as positive and negative. On the side of positive evaluative properties, you have being admirable, being pride-worthy, being lovable, etc., while on the negative side, you have being despicable, shameful, disgusting, etc. The same kind of polarity is found in emotions, which are standardly thought to divide into positive and negative emotions.⁵ What is meant by positive and negative emotions can be quite different depending on the context, but in the sense in which joy is opposed to sadness or pride to shame, for instance, the distinction appears to mirror that between positive and negative evaluative concepts.
- c) *Polarity*. A point that is closely related to the former is that many affective properties and many emotions form pairs of polar opposites. On the side of values, you have pairs such as admirable *versus* despicable, pride-worthy *versus* shameful, while on the side of emotions you have admiration *versus* spite, pride *versus* humility, love *versus* hate, etc.

Given these different considerations, one has to acknowledge that affective concepts are by nature related to specific responses: they wear their response-dependence on their sleeves.⁶ In fact, one might at first sight think that affective concepts and emotions are even more tightly connected than what would be true on the Value-Emotions Equivalences. One might thus suggest that what holds is the simple bi-conditional, according to which something is admirable in so far as one admires it, and so on for the other affective concepts. Such a suggestion, which is sometimes called Simple Subjectivism (Rachels 1986, chap. 3), will not do, however. The reason is that, as most

⁴ By contrast, the deontic does not appear to allow for degree – things are not, it seems, more or less obligatory or forbidden. See Hume 1739-40, III, vi: 530-31; Hare, 1952:152; and Mulligan 1998.

⁵ Surprise might be an exception here, since it is not clear whether it is a positive or a negative emotion. One possibility is to say that there are two kinds of surprise, one positive, and one negative. See Ortony, Clore & Collins 1988.

⁶ Some, like Wright (1992) and Johnston (2001) only consider dispositional or projective accounts to be response-dependent. For a more liberal take on response-dependence see D’Arms and Jacobson (2000, fn. 20).

would agree, we sometimes admire what is not admirable. The commonly accepted amendment to Simple Subjectivism is to add the condition that emotions be fitting or appropriate. Thus, we arrive at Value-Emotion Equivalences.

Consider the following bi-conditional:

(1) x is admirable if and only feeling admiration is appropriate in response to x.

Before assessing the plausibility of such propositions, it is necessary to further specify them. There are three interdependent questions. The first question is how to understand the relation between the two sides of the ‘if and only if’. The second question concerns the nature of the emotional response that is referred to. The last question is what is it for such a response to be appropriate or fitting? Let me consider these in turn.

The standard assumption, which as its name indicates is characteristic of the Fitting Attitude Analysis, is that (1) consists in an analysis of the concept *admirable*. The idea is that in what is assumed to be a strict equivalence, the concept is broken down into what are taken to be simpler conceptual elements, i.e. the notion of a feeling of admiration and the notion of appropriateness. Moreover, the equivalence is taken to be a conceptual truth, so that the failure to accept it betrays a failure to fully grasp the concept.⁷ But there are other ways to read (1). Thus, the biconditional could be held to be a contingent proposition that holds only in the actual world and which has to be established *a posteriori*. Another possibility is to read the biconditional as a possibly necessary, but substantial normative or even moral proposition, so that what is admirable is what it is that we are normatively or morally required to admire. However, the most prominent alternative to the Fitting Attitude Analysis interpretation is to read it as a conceptual elucidation, as opposed to an analysis. The equivalence would be taken to be a necessarily true proposition, that expresses the thought that the concept *admirable* is conceptually connected to the concepts of admiration and of appropriateness, but none of the concepts would be considered to be more fundamental. On such a no-priority view, the grasp of the two concepts would be interdependent.

⁷ See Zimmerman (this volume).

A second important question is what kind of response is invoked in such equivalences. By contrast with Brentano (1889), who explicitly refers to love in his analysis of the concept *good*, Fitting Attitude Analysis theorists have not restricted themselves to emotions (see Ewing 1947). Quite generally, it appears possible to plug into a putative analysis of evaluative concepts items as varied as evaluative judgements, conative states (such as desires), or even types of actions.⁸ However, when considering affective concepts it appears difficult to avoid the reference to states that standardly count as emotions. The follow-up question that arises is what kind of state emotions are. Depending on the account of emotion that is favoured, very different versions of the Value-Emotion Equivalence result, ranging from the more to the less plausible. Thus, if one takes emotions to be or necessarily require evaluative judgements, as the Judgemental Theory of Emotions proposes, then we obtain the proposition that something is admirable if and only judging that it is admirable is appropriate. In the most obvious of its interpretations, this proposition is true, but also viciously circular, so that it cannot be offered as an account of the concept *admirable*. The reason is that the very same concept is part of the content of the judgement mentioned in the right-hand-side, so that to the possession of the concept to be accounted for is required to understand the proposition.⁹ Fortunately, as will be made clear shortly, there are other theories of emotions on the market.

The third question is how to understand the notion of appropriateness. This simple question has proven particularly tricky. Answering it is crucial to avoid what has become known as the Wrong Kind of Reason Objection, because it was mainly targeted at versions of the Fitting Attitude Analysis expressed in terms of reasons for attitudes.¹⁰ In a nutshell, what poses a problem is that there can be a reason to feel an emotion toward something that fails to fall under the relevant affective concept. One can for example have prudential reason to feel admiration towards something that clearly fails to be admirable. Thus, the question is whether one can specify what the right kind of reasons are. In the same way, it can be appropriate to feel an emotion towards something that fails

⁸ See Oddie (this volume) for desires, and Bykvist 2009 for a survey of the different possibilities.

⁹ See Peacocke (1992: 89) for the same type of suggestion with respect to perceptual concepts.

¹⁰ See D'Arms & Jacobson 2000; Rabinovicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004; and Zimmerman (this volume).

to fall under the relevant affective concept, so that the right kind of appropriateness needs to be specified.

Quite generally, there are two main ways to conceive of what it is to be appropriate for an emotion.¹¹ The first is to take the concept to be normative or deontic. On this conception, an appropriate emotion is an emotion that ought to be felt. This is the standard account in the recent literature, but it is not the only one possible. On a different conception, appropriateness is a matter of correct representation. An appropriate emotion is an emotion that is correct from the epistemic point of view, in the sense that it represents things as they are, evaluatively speaking.¹²

An important virtue of such a representational account of appropriateness is that it makes the Wrong Kind of Reason objection easy to handle. Since the appropriateness of an emotion is defined in terms of whether that emotion represents things as they are evaluatively speaking, it is ruled out that feeling an emotion can be appropriate, in that sense, with respect to something that fails to fall under the relevant evaluative concept.¹³ According to such an account, something is admirable if and only if this thing is such that feeling admiration is correct in response to it, and this is so only if it is admirable.

One might worry that such an account would not be illuminating enough to be of interest. It appears that what is proposed is simply that something is admirable just in case it is admirable, and so forth for the other affective concepts. However, there is reason to think that in spite of its circularity, the resulting equivalence is of interest. What it underlines is the crucial epistemic role that emotions play in our grasp of affective concepts. As David Wiggins (1987) suggested, the important point to keep in mind is that there is nothing more fundamental to appeal to than admiration when we try to find out whether or not something is admirable, and the same can be said about other affective concepts.

The main virtue of this representational interpretation of the Value-Emotion Equivalence is that it is grounded on what is arguably a highly plausible account of emotions, the so-called Perceptual Theory of Emotions, according to which emotions are

¹¹ See Tappolet 2011.

¹² In Tappolet 2011, I argue that being appropriate, in that sense, is not normative.

¹³ This suggestion is close to Danielsson and Olson's claim that *x* is good means that *x* has properties that provide content-reasons to favour *x*, where content-reasons for an attitude are reasons for the correctness of the attitude, a notion which they claim is analogous to truth (2007).

perceptual experiences of a particular kind.¹⁴ What is specific about emotions, compared to sensory perceptual experiences, is that they represent things as having evaluative properties. Thus, an emotion of admiration with respect to a friend will be correct just in case the friend is really admirable. An important point here is that on this account, emotions have representational, albeit not conceptually articulated, content. Emotions represent their object as having specific evaluative properties, that is, as fearsome or disgusting, etc., even though the agent who undergoes the emotion need not possess the relevant evaluative concepts (*fearsome*, *disgust*, etc.).¹⁵

It would take us too far to discuss the Perceptual Theory of Emotions.¹⁶ The only point I would like to make here is that what makes it attractive is that it steers a middle course between two opposed accounts of emotions, each of which has some plausibility, but both of which are ultimately unsatisfactory. At one end of the spectrum, there is the so-called Feeling Theory, according to which emotions consists in states, such as bodily sensations, that are characterised by the way they feel, but which have no representational content (James 1890; Lange 1885; Whiting 2011). At the other end of the spectrum lies the Judgmental Theory, according to which emotions are or necessarily involve conceptually articulated judgements, so that to fear something would amount to judging that the thing in question is fearsome (Solomon 1976; Nussbaum 2001). The main objections to the Feeling Theory are that it cannot take into account that emotions have intentional objects – we are afraid of a dog, angry at someone, etc. – and that it fails to make room for the fact that we assess emotions in terms of how they fit their object, such as when we say that it is inappropriate to feel fear at an innocuous spider. Apart from the fact that it does a poor job at accounting for the fact that emotions are felt states, what plagues the Judgmental Theory is that it is incompatible with the observation that one can undergo an emotion without possessing the relevant concepts – one can be afraid of something without possessing the concept of fearsomeness, for instance.¹⁷

¹⁴ See Meinong 1917; de Sousa 1987 and 2002; Tappolet 1995, 2000, 2012; Johnston 2001; and Prinz 2004, 2006; Deonna 2006; Döring 2007; Goldie 2009; and Tye 2008. For critical discussions, see Deonna and Teroni 2012; and Brady 2013.

¹⁵ For non-conceptual contents, see *inter alia*, Evans 1982 and Peacocke 1992.

¹⁶ For critical discussion, see Deonna and Teroni 2012; Brady 2013; Dokic and Lemaire, forthcoming.

¹⁷ The same problem arises for so-called Quasi-Judgmental Theories, according to which the cognitive states are taken to be thoughts (Greenspan 1988) or construals (Roberts 2003).

In conclusion, it appears that one can spell out Value-Emotion Equivalences that are not only plausible in themselves, but also that are well supported by emotion theory. There are a number of questions that need to be discussed to fully assess the proposed interpretation of the Value-Emotion Equivalence. The focus here will be on a problem that raises the question of what it is for a concept to be evaluative.

2. *Are affective concepts evaluative?*

Sentences like ‘Natacha’s pizzicato is admirable’ or ‘Pierre’s attitude towards foreigners is disgusting’ make it difficult to deny that affective terms are evaluative, in the sense that it is part of their meaning that they convey positive or negative evaluations.¹⁸ What appears to be expressed by the first sentence is praise, while the second sentence appears to express stark criticism. Thus, on the assumption that what is true of terms also holds of concepts, it is natural to think that affective concepts like *admirable* and *disgusting* are inherently evaluative in the sense that a concept like *admirable* would by essence be a positive evaluative concept, while the opposite is true of *disgusting*.¹⁹

As has gone largely unnoticed, these claims can be challenged. As will be obvious if one considers affective concepts to be a subclass of thick concepts, the reason is that the considerations that are used to argue that so-called thick concepts, such as *courageous*, *generous* or *cruel*, are not inherently evaluative, can easily be transposed to affective concepts.²⁰ It will be useful to first consider a distinct challenge to the claim that affective concepts are evaluative.

It can be agreed that being admirable is distinct from being admired, and being admirable is also distinct from being such as to cause admiration. What is admired, or what is such as to cause admiration, can be admirable but it need not be so. Given the

¹⁸ I’ll assume here that if a term or concept is inherently evaluative, it is also inherently valenced, but see Dancy 1995: 265 for the claim that thick terms and concepts are evaluative in their meaning, but yet contextually variable in valence. For discussion, see Väyrynen 2011:11-12

¹⁹ It is not clear that it makes sense to ask whether a concept, understood as a content component of mental states, is inherently evaluative, for by contrast with terms it is not clear that a concept can be evaluative in the weak sense of allowing for evaluative usages, given a particular context. Unlike a term, a concept does not change its meaning. For the sake of argument, I will abstract from this difference between terms and concepts.

²⁰ The notion of thick concept has been introduced by Bernard Williams (1985: 128-130).

analogy with concepts such as *bendable*, or *expansible*, in which the suffix ‘-able’ or ‘-ible’ expresses a possibility (what is bendable being what can be bent, and what is expansible being what can be expanded), one could suggest that *admirable*, *disgusting*, and so forth, can similarly be parsed as what *can* be admired, what *can* disgust, and so on. If so, concepts such as *admirable* or *disgusting* would not be evaluative. In reply, one could suggest that it is simply obvious that *admirable* and *disgusting* are evaluative, or indeed normative, concepts. Clearly, that reply will not convince someone who doubts that such concepts are evaluative. The likely rejoinder to such doubts is that there is an important difference between *bendable* and *admirable* in that the fact that something is bendable does not entail anything about its goodness or badness, whereas that something is admirable seems to entail that it is good, or in fact good to a high degree, in at least one respect. Generally, it appears that when we describe things in affective terms we place them on scales that goes from the best to the worst (*pro tanto*), or simple from better to worse (*pro tanto*). Being more or less admirable entails being more or less good at least in a certain respect, while being more or less disgusting entails being more or less bad at least in a certain respect.

However, that affective concepts are thus connected to *good* and *bad* is what can be challenged in the light of the discussion of the thick concepts, a type of concept which is thought to be opposed to thin concepts.²¹ Typical examples of thick concepts are *courageous*, *generous*, and *cruel*, whereas *good* and *bad* are typical examples of thin concepts.²² While the former are thought to involve both an evaluative and a descriptive aspect, the latter are thought to be purely evaluative or normative. A question which has attracted a lot of attention is whether the two components of thick concepts can be disentangled into an evaluative (or normative) component and a descriptive component.²³ In order to show that the components can be disentangled, some, like Simon Blackburn (1992), have argued that thick concepts are not inherently evaluative, or more precisely, that on the assumption that thick concepts are by definition inherently evaluative, there

²¹ According to Williams, judgements involving thick concepts are supposed to be both action-guiding and world-guided, while thin concepts are deemed merely action-guiding and more general. The question of how exactly to characterize the distinction is debated. See Gibbard 1992; Dancy 1995; Scheffler 1987; Tappolet 2004; Elstein and Hurka 2009.

²² Deontic concepts such as *right*, *wrong* and *ought* are also taken to be thin.

²³ See Kirchin 2013b (6-7), as well as more generally, Kirchin 2013a.

are no such concepts. What is of interest here is not so much the entanglement issue than the question whether thick concepts are inherently evaluative.²⁴ The Variability Argument that has been presented is based on evidence that suggests that thick terms are contextually variable in evaluative valence.²⁵ This is taken to show that the evaluations that thick terms and concepts are used to convey are not part of their meaning, but depend on context. Two kinds of examples have been and still are discussed. First, there are examples involving comparative locutions, such as ‘too tidy’ and ‘too industrious’ (Hare 1952: 121). What is suggested is that even though ‘tidy’ and ‘industrious’ as typically taken to convey positive evaluation, they have what appears to be literal uses in which they express criticism. In the second kind of example, unmodified thick evaluative terms or concepts appear to convey an evaluation that is opposite to the usual one, such as when we say ‘Yes, cruel certainly, but that’s just what made it such fun’ (Hare 1981: 73), or ‘This years’ carnival was not lewd. I hope it’ll be lewd next year’ (Väyrynen 2011: 8, who acknowledges Eklund, p.c.).

Now, the striking fact is that affective terms and concepts allow for the same kind of examples. One can say ‘This person is too admirable to be really likeable’ or ‘The Halloween outfit was not disgusting enough’. In the first sentence, ‘admirable’ appears to have changed its valence for the sentence appears to convey criticism, while in the second sentence, ‘disgusting’ appears to convey a positive evaluation. In the same way, one can say ‘Yes, disgusting certainly, but that’s just what made it such fun’ or ‘This years’ Halloween outfit was not really disgusting. I hope that it’ll be disgusting next year.’ On the basis of such examples, it appears easy to argue that affective terms and concepts are not inherently evaluative.

The question is what to think of the Variability Argument. In fact, there are good reasons to resist the argument. A first point to note is that concepts like *good* and *bad*, whose status has not been questioned, allow for the same kind of examples. Thus, a wine can be said to be too good to be used for cooking (Väyrynen 2011: 7). And one can also have cases of simple predication, such as when one says ‘Yes, bad certainly, but that’s

²⁴ In fact, this debate is confusing, for if advocates of disentangling hold that thick concepts can be split into thinly evaluative concepts and descriptive concepts they would seem to be committed to the view that thick concepts are inherently evaluative. I am grateful to Jonas Olson for underlining this point.

²⁵ See Väyrynen 2011.

just what made is such fun’, or ‘This years’ performance of the conservative party was not bad. I hope that it’ll be bad next year’. Such examples should make us suspicious.

Let us first consider the cases involving comparatives. As Väyrynen (2011: 5-9) notes, the way modifiers such as *too* and *not ... enough* behave in general explains how a concept may appear to flip its valence. What such constructions involve are implicit or explicit standards of comparison, and it is relative to such standards that the evaluative content of the whole expression can be understood. In Väyrynen’s words, ‘the standard for counting as satisfying *too F* or *not F enough*, is typically neither the same as the standard for satisfying *F* nor determined by the same factors’ (2011: 7). For example, the standard for satisfying *loud* is clearly distinct from the standard of satisfying *not loud enough to keep the neighbours awake* or from that of satisfying *too loud than is safe for hearing*. An interesting point that this example brings to light is that *too* and *not ... enough* can take a non-evaluative concept, such as *loud*, to form a complex evaluative concept. This bolsters the case against the Variability Argument, for there is no more reason to believe that *loud* becomes an evaluative concept in such a context than there is to believe that *tidy*, *industrious*, etc. change their valence.

What about the unmodified cases? A number of moves are available to defend the view that thick concepts are inherently evaluative. A first point to note, however, is that in so far as concepts and not only terms are concerned, it will not do to invoke the distinction between semantic meaning and speaker meaning.²⁶ The reason is that this distinction has no equivalent at the level of concepts. Thus, the suggestion that a term like ‘lewd’ is used ironically, such as when the speakers mocks the sort of prudishness involved in the standard use of the term, cannot be transposed to the level of thoughts and concepts. But there are other moves open to the invariantist.

A reply that works at both levels is that which appeals to the distinction between predicative and attributive uses of terms and concept.²⁷ Consider a typical predicative adjective, such as ‘green’. When you say ‘this is a green ball’, what you say is ‘this is a ball and this is green’, so that if something is a green ball, it follows that it is green. By contrast, an attributive adjective, such as ‘big’ or ‘tall’, functions as predicate modifier.

²⁶ See Väyrynen 2011 for a discussion of this and of other strategies.

²⁷ See Ross 1930 (65); Geach 1956; as well as Zimmerman, (this volume).

But when you say ‘this is a big mouse’, you obviously don’t say ‘this is a mouse and this is big’. A big mouse need not be a big pet, and it is clearly not big *qua* mammal or animal. Now, evaluative terms and concepts appear to allow for both attributive and predicative uses. When you say that something is a good knife, this does not entail that it is good as such, for relative to a different kind of thing, such as being a weapon (compared with a gun or a carronade, say) what you consider need not be good. In such cases, what is good is not good *simpliciter* but relative to a standard. In other cases, however, such as when we say that knowledge is good, there seem to be no such standards. When we say or judge that knowledge is good, we don’t say or judge that knowledge is good *qua* F, while it could be bad *qua* G.²⁸

With this in mind, let us return to the question whether thick terms and concepts are inherently evaluative or not. What can be suggested is that at least in some cases, apparent inversions are due to the attributivity of the term or concept. As Väyrynen (2011: 10) notes, being frugal *qua* college master might be a bad thing, while being frugal *qua* person might be a good thing. In the same way, being cruel or disgusting might be a good thing *qua* joke, for it might add to its amusingness, while being quite bad *qua* public address, say. It might be the case that relative to some standard, a term or concept has a fixed valence, such as when frugality is predicated of persons, but relative to other standards, the valence can shift (Väyrynen 2011: 11). The important point is that the variability in attributive uses does not entail that the concept itself is variable.

The example of the joke that is all the better for being cruel or disgusting indicates a second reply to the Variability Argument, one that uses G. E. Moore’s Principle of Organic Unities. According to Moore ‘The value of a whole must not be assumed to be the same as the sum of the values of its parts’ (1903/1998: 28). The idea is that if two elements are put together, the resulting whole may have either more or less intrinsic value than the states would have if they existed alone. Moreover, on a holistic interpretation of this principle, the parts retain their value when they are put together in a whole.²⁹ This idea can be put to work in reply to the Variability Argument as follows:

²⁸ According to some, such as Geach (1956) and Thomson (1992), ‘good’ has no predicative use, but as the knowledge example manifests, this is doubtful. See Olson (this volume).

²⁹ See Hurka 1998 for a distinction between this interpretation and a ‘conditionality interpretation’, according to which parts change their value when they enter a whole. See also Carlson (this volume).

being bad in some respect might add to the positive value of a whole, something which explains the apparent valence shift. For example, a joke that includes a dose of cruelty or disgustingness might be all the better for it.

A last reply to the Variability Argument that appears promising is to appeal to a particular kind of contextual enrichment. So-called ‘free enrichment’ is a mechanism by which additional information is provided by the context, such as when ‘I have had supper’ has to be interpreted as ‘I have had supper tonight’ given the context.³⁰ The transposition to concepts is not straightforward, but one way to go is to consider what happens in cases of contextual enrichment that depend on specific concepts, such as indexicals. When I think that I am hungry, the context determines that it is me, Christine, who is hungry. In same way, one could suggest that when it seems to me that I think that I have had supper, the context can be such that what I really think is that I have had supper tonight.

The suggestion, then, is that what explains the apparent variability is that what appears as a complete sentence or thought is in fact incomplete but gets filled in by the context. Thus, the sentence ‘he is frugal’ might express a negative evaluation not because ‘frugal’ is negatively valenced, but because the context is such that what is uttered or thought is negative, such as in ‘he is frugal to the extent of stinginess’. In this example, what would be expressed is that the person is too frugal, so that it is not a surprise, given what we have seen above, that the sentence conveys a negative evaluation. The context might also provide a particular standard relative to which the standard valence of a term or concepts appears inversed. Thus, given a particular context, the sentence ‘He is frugal’ might have to be understood as ‘He is a frugal College master’. Thus, the reply that makes use of free enrichment reinforces the one that is based on the distinction between attributive and predicative uses.

If this is on the right lines, there are several explanations of the apparent variability in valence, some of which are cashed out in terms of mechanism that work together, such as free enrichment and relativisation to a standard. Of course, it cannot be excluded that some examples cannot be explained by the working of these mechanisms, but the onus lies with the advocate of the Variability Argument to make their case. As

³⁰ See Recanati 2004: Chap. 2. For an application to the case of thick concepts, see Väyrynen 2011: 13.

things stands, it is safe to assume that affective terms and concepts are inherently evaluative. It follows that Value-Emotions Equivalences are not threatened by worries about the evaluative status of affective concepts.³¹

Conclusion

It is not only difficult to deny that affective concepts such as *admirable*, *shameful*, and *disgusting* are intimately related to emotions, but as we have seen there are reasons to believe that such concepts are conceptually tied to emotion concepts. There are obvious lexical ties between the corresponding terms. Moreover, the formal objects of emotions are picked out by affective concepts. And finally, putative affective properties and emotions share important structural traits. According to a plausible suggestion, the relation between affective concepts and emotions can be expressed in the form of what I have called Value-Emotion Equivalences, according to which something falls under an affective concept if and only if feeling the corresponding emotion is appropriate in response to that thing. As was underlined, there are quite different ways to read such biconditionals, and their plausibility varies depend on how they are understood. What I have argued is that the representational interpretation, according to which an appropriate emotion is one that is correct from the epistemic point of view, has the virtue of making the Wrong Kind of Reason objection easy to handle. It is also well-supported by what appears to be a plausible account of emotions, the Perceptual Theory of Emotions, which underlines the analogies between emotions and sensory perceptual experiences.

An important worry is whether concepts such as *admirable* are genuinely evaluative. I have argued that even though the variability considerations that are used to argue that thick terms and concepts are not inherently evaluative can easily be transposed to the case of affective concepts, these considerations fail to show that such terms and concepts are only evaluative in the pragmatic sense that they have evaluative uses. The cases in which affective terms appear to have a different valence from the standard one can be explained in terms of a number of mechanisms, such as relativisation to a standard

³¹ For a different take on this debate, see Väyrynen 2013 for a defense of a pragmatic conception according to which thick concepts are not evaluative in virtue of their content.

and free enrichment, so that there is no need to abandon the intuitive claim that such terms and concepts are inherently evaluative.

Before I close, I would like to flag a further worry, which is related to the fact that some evaluative concepts, such as *courageous*, *generous* or *good*, seem to lack close ties to emotions. This alleged fact raises doubts about the prospect of finding Value-Emotions Equivalences for each and every evaluative concept. The question at stake is whether all evaluative concepts have a conceptual connection to emotion concepts. This is not the place to discuss this issue in any depth, but let me sketch a possible way to handle it.

In fact, the worry splits in two. First, it concerns thick concepts, that is, concepts such as *generous* and *courageous*, which, as we have seen, are thought to combine both a descriptive and an evaluative (or more generally normative) component. The question is whether Value-Emotions Equivalences hold for such concept, given that it is far from obvious that such concepts are as closely related to emotions as affective concepts are. This question is related to the difficult issue concerning the relation between the descriptive and the evaluative (or normative) component. Following John McDowell (1978; 1979), many deny that thick concepts can be analysed or disentangled into two distinct components.³² The reason this question is related to the worry about the generality of Value-Emotion Equivalences is due to the fact that the most obvious way to relate thick concepts and emotion concepts is by spelling out the relation between thick concepts and affective concepts. The idea is that it is because of its connection to the admirable that the courageous and the generous are connected to admiration. The question is how exactly to spell out such an idea, but in principle it appears feasible to say that an action is courageous if and only if that action has specific natural properties, such being performed in spite of a perceived threat, in virtue of which it is admirable.³³

The second part of the worry concerns the most general evaluative concepts, such as *good* or *bad*. Such thin concepts also appear to lack an obvious connection to emotion concepts, something which is a problem for the claim that evaluative concepts are, quite generally, tied to emotion concepts. One might be tempted to postulate emotions that are tailored for the good and the bad, respectively. A difficulty with this proposal is that none

³² See Elstein & Hurka 2009 for critical discussion.

³³ See Tappolet 2004.

of the known lists of emotion kinds, whether they are drawn from folk-theorising, from philosophy, or from other fields, mention such emotions. A more plausible way to deal with this issue is to claim that *good* and *bad* are related to positive and negative emotions. Thus, one could suggest that something is good if and only if it makes positive emotions such as admiration, joy, or pride appropriate, whereas something is bad if and only if it makes negative emotions such as contempt, sadness, or shame appropriate. To assess this proposal, the main question to address is what positive and negative emotions are. This is in fact a more difficult question than it might seem to be, because what might appear to be the most natural proposals (that is, proposals in terms of hedonic tone or in terms of motivation) face serious difficulties.³⁴ In the end, it might be that what positive emotions have in common is that they are tied to positive evaluative concepts, while negative ones are tied to negative evaluative concepts. Whether this makes for too tight a circle is a good question. In any case, the hope of specifying what is characteristic of evaluative concepts, as opposed to non-evaluative concepts, in terms of their relation to emotion concepts depends on the possibility of generalizing Value-Emotion Equivalences.³⁵

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³⁴ See Teroni and Deonna 2012.

³⁵ I am grateful to Jonas Olson for his helpful comments.

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