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Emotional reason

*Deliberation, motivation,
and the nature of value*

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*Classical and
Contemporary
Philosophy*

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Emotions and the cognitive-conative divide

Philosophical accounts of freedom, practical reason, and moral or personal value typically presuppose that we already understand what it is for us to have the capacities for desire and evaluative judgment, capacities that are typically understood in light of the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide. Consequently, these accounts proceed without questioning that assumption or the resulting understanding of these capacities; this is, I believe, a mistake. In this chapter, I shall bring this assumption into question, arguing that an adequate account of our evaluative attitudes, and therefore of value itself, requires that we reject the assumption. In its place I shall offer an account of value as constituted in large part by what I shall call "felt evaluations," a notion I use to provide a distinctive kind of account of emotion and desire. This account will be sketched here, and developed in more detail in chapters 3–4.

2.1 THE PROBLEM OF IMPORT

The picture physical science paints of nature is one of pure mechanism, devoid of any kind of meaning whatsoever. As mechanistic, nature operates according to laws that specify how things will happen or generally tend to happen; consequently, the possibility of there being normative standards of correctness in these physical processes is simply unintelligible from within this picture. On the face of it, such a picture of nature seems at odds with the existence of minds like ours, for minds essentially involve meaning and representational states and therefore standards of correctness in terms of which these states are to be assessed. Moreover, minds seem essentially to involve conscious states with a kind of subjectivity and potential for freedom that again seem not to fit into our understanding of mechanism. Given the seeming correctness of this

broadly mechanistic picture of nature, and given the obvious fact of the existence of minds, how do the two fit together? This is the *mind-body problem*.

Recent attempts in philosophy of mind to solve the mind-body problem have focused on two main issues, both of which are central to our understanding of minds: intentionality and consciousness. The thought is that by addressing consciousness we can come to an understanding of the essential subjectivity of minds, and by focusing on intentionality we can come to an understanding of the nature of meaning and standards of correctness. To provide an account of intentionality and consciousness, therefore, can seem to be to provide a solution to the mind-body problem, at least in its essential outlines.

There are, of course, other ontological problems involving the mind, though these problems are thought to be solvable in light of the general account of the mind provided by these accounts of intentionality and consciousness. One such problem relevant here is that of the ontological status of moral or personal value: once again, there seems to be a conflict between the existence of moral value and the scientific picture of nature as the *locus* of empirical fact, which is apparently devoid of value. In general, many meta-ethical accounts of moral value are given at least in part in terms of conation – especially desire as the paradigm conative state. What motivates such an appeal to desire in giving an account of value is the intuitive sense that there is a conceptual connection between desire and what is good or worth pursuing, though the exact nature of that connection varies from one account to another.

The trouble is that accounts of the mind and its place in nature, focused as they are on intentionality and consciousness, are unable to provide an account of desire that is rich enough to do the job. The real issue here is intentionality, for desire is essentially an intentional state, even if it is not always conscious. In focusing exclusively on intentionality, philosophers of mind conceive the task of understanding the nature of desire as that of providing an account of what it is for a creature to represent something as a goal and so to use this representation within a broader system of representations, including cognitive states (e.g., beliefs), to generate a course of action intelligible as appropriate to achieve the goal. Thus, the intentionality of desire is understood in terms of two kinds of standards of correctness: directly in terms of instrumental rationality, for it is this that underwrites the appropriateness of action to goal satisfaction; and indirectly in terms of epistemic rationality, for, even

if one's actions are appropriate to achieving the goal in light of one's beliefs, the goal may not be achieved because one's beliefs are false. These two kinds of standards of correctness defining the intentional content of desires, however, are inadequate for understanding a conceptual connection between desire and what is worth pursuing.

To see this, consider a chess-playing computer. To characterize the computer as playing chess is to articulate a goal around which the computer's behavior is organized: its outputs are intelligible as non-random legal moves that make some sense as attempts to win. For all practical purposes, this ability requires that the computer be able to apply at least a rudimentary form of instrumental rationality in order to formulate sub-goals that must be accomplished in order to achieve the highest-order goal of winning the game. This means that we can understand why, in light of this highest-order goal, the computer would make the moves it does, thereby providing at least the beginnings of an account of the computer as having intentional states.¹ However, does the computer *desire* to win? For this to be so, winning itself must be intelligible as worth pursuing for the computer. Yet the appeal to instrumental rationality so far simply presupposes the worthiness of winning and cannot on its own provide an account of it. Because we cannot make sense of winning as worth pursuing by the computer's lights, the best we can say is that the computer exhibits rationally mediated goal-directedness rather than a genuine desire.

By contrast, a dog can desire to go out on a walk.² This means not

¹ Indeed, Daniel Dennett thinks it is the whole of the account; see his *The Intentional Stance*. Of course, many would object to the idea of a computer having intentional states. The standard motivation for this objection, voiced clearly in John Searle's "Minds, Brains, and Programs" (*Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3 [1980], pp. 417–24), is that the symbols computers manipulate do not have intentional content insofar as they fail to be hooked up to the world in the right way. That is, what has gone missing is an understanding of how epistemic rationality applies to the computer. Nonetheless, however this account gets filled in, my basic point remains: instrumental rationality, even when combined with epistemic rationality, as the basis of an account of intentionality is insufficient to account for the conceptual connection between desires and what is worth pursuing.

² Once again, this is a controversial claim, for some philosophers have denied that non-linguistic animals can have any mental states at all (See, e.g., Donald Davidson's "Belief and the Basis of Meaning" and "Thought and Talk," both in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1984]; and see R. G. Frey's *Interest and Rights: The Case Against Animals* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1980]). For the moment, I want to sidestep this issue, for my example is intended merely to illustrate the distinction between goal-directedness and desire. Nonetheless, for a detailed defense of the possibility of animal thought, see my "Significance, Emotions, and Objectivity: Some Limits of Animal

merely that the dog is able to behave in ways that are instrumental to its going on a walk by, for example, bringing its leash to its master or scratching at the back door, but also that the dog cares about going on walks: this is something that matters or has significance or importance to it, as is clear in part from its frustration or anger at not being let out and its joy when it finally is. I shall use "import" to denote any such worthiness imparted by a subject's concern for something.³ As such, import provides a non-instrumental reason for the dog's pursuit of the walk and therefore makes intelligible the idea that the dog desires it and finds it worth pursuing. Consequently, the dog is intelligible as a qualitatively different kind of thing than a chess-playing computer: the dog is a potential subject of import and as such has a "stake" in the outcome in a way that is simply unintelligible for the computer.

Desires, therefore, are to be distinguished from goal-directedness in terms of the way in which they involve import.⁴ Nonetheless, both desire and goal-directedness are intentional states insofar as they have a kind of representational content that guides subsequent behavior. Insofar as attempts to solve the mind-body problem are focused merely on intentionality and consciousness, this distinction between desire and goal-directedness is simply ignored. Given this distinction, however, we need to ask about the place of import in nature, for import, like moral value, essentially involves a kind of worth that seems to have no place in nature as science conceives of it. This is the *problem of import*, and it is a problem that must be solved in order to distinguish desire from goal-directedness and so to use the resulting account of desire in providing even richer accounts of personal and moral value. By ignoring the distinction between desire and goal-directedness, philosophers of mind have thereby ignored the problem of import and so created a mismatch between the kind of account of desire they offer and the kind of account

³ "Thought" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh [1994]) and "The Significance of Emotions," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 31 (1994), pp. 319–31.

⁴ My use of the term "import" stems from, and is intended to suggest, Charles Taylor's work on the way in which values and the rationality of values enter into an account of what it is to be a person. See his *Human Agency and Language* and his *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). Notice that import, understood this way, is a rather generic axiological term; I shall later (in chapter 4) distinguish different kinds of import instituted by different kinds of concern (caring and valuing), in part as a way of distinguishing persons from animals.

⁵ This is a point Michael Smith misses entirely in claiming that "having a goal is being in a state with which the world must fit, [and] being in a state with which the world must fit is desiring" (*The Moral Problem*, p. 118).

presupposed by the richer kind of value that lies at the heart of the motivational and deliberative problems discussed in chapter 1.

2.2 EMOTIONS AS EVALUATIVE FEELINGS

As described above, import is in general a kind of worth imparted by a subject's concern for something. Solving the problem of import therefore requires giving an account of the relevant kind of concern and showing how that concern can give rise to import. Clearly, such concern will involve the kind of goal-directedness described above, but just as clearly such goal-directedness is insufficient. The question is, what more is needed?

In this section, I shall suggest more than argue that to solve the problem of import we must turn to the emotions. In doing so, I shall provide a brief sketch of an account of emotions and their connection to import. However, this kind of account runs counter to standard accounts of emotions because it runs afoul of the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide. In §§2.3–2.4, therefore, I shall discuss these standard, "cognitivist" accounts of emotions, arguing that the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide implicit in these cognitivist accounts prevents an adequate solution to the problem of import. This provides powerful motivation for the kind of theory of emotions I shall sketch here and develop in more detail in chapter 3.

Emotions are essentially feelings of a certain kind, and a large part of the difficulty in articulating an account of emotions is that of understanding the kind of feelings at issue. Such feelings are not reducible to bodily sensations, as is clear when we consider our ordinary descriptions of emotional feelings. In having an emotion, one may feel uncomfortable, uneasy (or at ease), lighthearted, on top of the world, pushed around, or like nothing is going to work. In none of these cases is the feeling a literal description of a bodily sensation. Thus, when I feel uneasy as three young men follow close behind me on a dark, deserted street, my discomfort is not the discomfort I feel with an upset stomach. For to say that I feel uneasy might be taken as an alternative, albeit somewhat vague, way of saying that I am afraid, for fear is, roughly, a feeling of unease because things threaten to go badly. In this way, emotional feelings are something like a sense of how things are going – whether well or poorly. By contrast, to say that I feel queasy in my stomach is not an alternative way of describing my fear, and I can feel afraid without

any such sensations. As a result, bodily sensations must be understood as something we feel in addition to our emotions and not as an essential part of those emotions.

Emotional feelings, therefore, are essentially evaluative feelings: feelings of things going well or poorly. This point can be developed more clearly with some technical vocabulary. The *target* of an emotion is the object at which the emotion is directed: when I am afraid of the bear or angry at Agnes, the bear and Agnes are the targets of my emotions. What makes an emotion be the kind of emotion it is and so distinguishes it from other kinds of emotion is the way in which the emotion construes the target as having a kind of import. Thus, fear involves construing its target as dangerous, anger as offensive, satisfaction as a good achieved, etc. Such an evaluative construal, as definitive of an emotion as the kind of emotion it is, is that emotion's *formal object*. Emotions are *evaluative feelings* insofar as their formal objects involve import in this way: to fear the bear or be angry at Agnes is to feel the bear to be dangerous or to feel Agnes to be offensive.

Part of the point of describing emotions as feelings is to highlight their passivity: the capacity for emotion is a kind of *receptivity* to import. Conversely, we might say, the import of your situation impresses itself on you in your feeling a particular emotion. This has two implications. First, we can assess the emotion for warrant depending on whether its target really has the import defined by the emotion's formal object. For example, after a hard, frustrating day at work I get annoyed at my dog for giving me his usual, exuberant greeting, which I normally enjoy. Here, my emotion of annoyance is unwarranted precisely because it is not properly responsive to the import things have for me. Consider another example: John is afraid as the fire is about to consume his house. If this fear is to be warranted, that can only be because the fire is a threat to something that matters or has import to him; there is something rationally odd about his fear if the house did not have this import to him. Thus, his fear would be unwarranted if he had recently inherited the house from a distant relative he never knew, was trying unsuccessfully to sell it, and was contemplating committing arson for the insurance money anyway. In such a case, apparently, John does not care about what happens to the house so long as he gets his money, and this absence of import undermines the warrant of his fear. In general, therefore, the target must actually have the import defined by the formal object in order for the emotion to be warranted.

Second, and ultimately more important, in order to be a standard for the warrant of emotions, import must have a kind of objectivity as existing independently of particular emotions. It is this status as an independent object that enables us to make sense of import as impressing itself on us in feeling emotions.⁵

Another part of the point of describing emotions as feelings is to distinguish the kind of evaluation implicit in them from the evaluations explicit in judgment. For, in having an emotion, one does not make the evaluation of the target dispassionately but rather feels the evaluation of the target. This is part of the point of describing emotions as pleasures and pains. Thus, fear differs from a mere judgment of the presence of danger insofar as one is pained by that danger, and satisfaction differs from a mere judgment of a good achieved insofar as one is pleased by that achievement. Pleasure and pain just are the distinctive kind of passionate feelings of import that emotions are: emotions feel good or bad and in this way are directed at import as their intentional object. Moreover, as I shall argue in chapter 3, it is because emotions are pleasures and pains that they are intelligible as motivating.

In short, emotions are evaluative feelings in that they are pleasant or painful responses to import as an intentional object that impresses itself on us in having the emotion.

Nonetheless, emotions are also an essential part of what constitutes import, as might be suggested by this understanding of emotions as pleasant or painful: pleasure and pain seem to be the right kind of source for the concern that imports import. Of course, it is not plausible to say that for something to have import to one, one must now have some emotion concerning it. Rather, what is plausible is the weaker claim that something does not have import for one if, no matter what happens, one fails entirely to respond emotionally to it. For example, if in the face of the most malicious, intentional, repeated, and successful efforts by another to thwart your achievement of a goal you fail to be moved to anger or at least annoyance or frustration, it is hard to make sense of that

⁵ This claim requires further justification, for it is unclear exactly what kind of object import is, especially given import's status as imparted by the individual's concern. I shall return to this issue briefly in §2.4 and more fully in chapter 3. Notice, however, that my claim here is that import is independent only of *particular* emotions, not of emotions generally. My claim in chapter 3 will be that import emerges out of a distinctive kind of pattern of emotions, in keeping with the intuition broached above and sketched below that emotions are partially constitutive of import.

goal as having any import to you. If you do not feel it in your heart, at least on some relevant occasions, then you fail to care about it.

The idea, then, is to appeal not to particular emotions but rather to patterns of emotional response to something as a way of making sense of it as having import. Consequently, we can make sense of particular emotions as themselves being warranted or unwarranted responses to import depending on whether they fit into some such pattern. Moreover, we can make sense of motivational pulls that similarly fit into such a pattern as pulls towards what is worth pursuing – as, that is, genuine desires that are themselves responsive to import. The kind of concern that imparts import, therefore, is not itself a particular mental state but rather this sort of pattern of emotions and desires.

2.3 EMOTIONAL COGNITIVISM

Nonetheless, this account of emotions as evaluative feelings may look inherently confused in two ways. First, as evaluations, emotions are more or less warranted responses to how things are in the world and so involve intentional content; as such, it might seem, they are essentially cognitions. By contrast, the feelings of pleasure and pain involved in emotions seem to be essentially non-intentional and non-cognitive. Consequently, it may look like I am illicitly sliding between a sense of “feels good or bad” that involves qualitative tone (i.e., “is pleasant or painful”) as well as, perhaps, motivation, and a sense that involves intentional content (i.e., “looks to be good or bad”). These two kinds of state seem to be fundamentally different, and, insofar as emotions involve both, that is because emotions are composite states of cognition, qualitative feels, and perhaps conation. So, the objection concludes, the very notion of an evaluative feeling, as a unitary state of pleasure or pain at some import, is inherently confused.

The assumption implicit in this first objection is, in effect, that of the cognitive–conative divide, discussed in §1.2: cognitive states, as having mind-to-world direction of fit, must be essentially different in kind from both conative states, which have world-to-mind direction of fit, and qualitative states, which have no direction of fit at all. Given this essential difference, it is illegitimate to slide between talk of pleasure and pain, as qualitative or conative, and talk of evaluation, as cognitive. Insofar as emotions involve evaluations, qualitative feels, and conations, they must be composite states.

Indeed, with the assumption of the cognitive–conative divide in place, a second apparent confusion in my account comes into view, this time concerning the nature of evaluation. I claimed that import is simultaneously both subjective and objective. As subjective, import is a kind of worth constituted by, and relative to, individuals; for example, by desiring some end (we might think) I thereby constitute not only that end but also things that bear on the achievement of that end as having import. In this way, the mental states that constitute import have world-to-mind direction of fit and so are conations, prototypically desires, as with the example just given. However, as objective, import is an entity to which certain mental states must be properly responsive; such states must therefore be cognitions, with mind-to-world direction of fit. Thus, I might come to discover that something is a threat to the achievement of an end I desire and in this way come to discover its import to me. In this way, we can distinguish two kinds of evaluation in terms of their direction of fit: *constituting evaluation*, with its world-to-mind direction of fit, and *discovering evaluation*, with its mind-to-world direction of fit. Yet, on the account I just sketched, emotions must be simultaneously constituting evaluations (insofar as import is subjective) and discovering evaluations (insofar as import is objective) as well as non-intentional qualitative states of pleasure or pain. Given the cognitive–conative divide, however, no unitary state can be both conative and cognitive, let alone qualitative as well; my account therefore involves an unworkable confusion.

If we accept these two objections and the underlying assumption of the cognitive–conative divide (which I do not for reasons to be provided below), the obvious solution is to divide and conquer: we should understand emotions as composite states of cognition, conation, and qualitative feels. This is the fundamental idea behind emotional cognitivism, currently the most popular kind of theory of emotions.

Emotional cognitivism purports to provide a reductive account of emotions in terms of belief, desire, and bodily sensation. The basic motive for this reductionism is something like Ockham's razor: postulate as few basic kinds of entities as possible in order to understand the phenomena. Thus, the idea is that, since we need to postulate beliefs, desires, and bodily sensations anyway, we can and should get away with an account of the intentionality of emotions – of their having targets and formal objects – as well as of their motivational pull and distinctive qualitative feels in terms of these antecedently intelligible states of belief,

desire, and bodily sensation. In this way, fear gets understood as the combination of the belief that some danger looms, the desire to avoid it, as well as, perhaps, sensations of queasiness in one's stomach. Likewise, anger is reducible to the belief that one has been offended, the desire to retaliate, and sensations of blood rushing to one's head.

There are, however, serious problems for emotional cognitivism. In the remainder of this section, I shall address two such problems, namely the problem of the emotionality of emotions and the problem of rational conflict with judgment, and I shall argue that these problems require that we give up on emotional cognitivism's reductivism. This will put me in a position in §2.4 to argue in light of the problem of import directly against the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide, which underlies and motivates emotional cognitivism, thereby motivating my alternative account (presented in chapter 3).

2.3.1 The problem of emotionality

One standard objection to emotional cognitivism is that it cannot capture the "emotionality" of emotions – what is distinctive of emotions as the kind of mental state they are. Thus, it is commonly noted, it is possible to believe there is a danger present, want to avoid that danger, and feel butterflies in one's stomach without feeling fear. We must, it seems, make a distinction between the emotional evaluation of something as an object of fear and the non-emotional evaluation of it as dangerous, and cognitivists may seem unable to make this distinction; this is the *problem of emotionality*.

To account for the emotionality of emotions, cognitivists have therefore applied one of two basic strategies. The first is to account for emotionality in terms of some special kind of belief or desire. Thus, Joel Marks claims: "one can only have a feeling of fear if one believes that what transforms a(n evaluative) judgment into an emotion is 'intensity' of some desire with respect to the judgment."⁶

By appealing to the notion of a strong desire, Marks tries to account for the physiological and sensational effects of emotions. We can, he claims, answer the question of why, for example, one felt butterflies in one's stomach by appealing to the strength of one's desire. Furthermore, he claims, a strong desire may well result in other effects of emotions:

⁶ "A Theory of Emotion," *Philosophical Studies*, 42 (1982), pp. 227–42, at p. 232.

logical missteps and hasty inferences, in part as the result of a failure to notice certain relevant features of the situation.

A central difficulty with this appeal to the strength of desire as an attempt to capture the emotionality of emotions is that it is not clear how we can give an account of the relevant kind of strength. For, on the one hand, it might seem that a desire is strong in the sense that it is colored by emotion, but such an appeal to emotion would be viciously circular. On the other hand, we might avoid this appeal to emotion by understanding the sense in which one desire is stronger than another in terms of a disposition to act on one desire rather than another in cases in which they conflict. However, this account of strength is inadequate to capture the emotionality of emotions, for, once again, it seems we can have a desire that is relatively strong in this sense, along with the requisite belief and bodily sensation, and still not feel the emotion.

Another variant of this first strategy is to account for emotionality in terms of a special kind of belief or judgment; this is the tack taken by Martha Nussbaum.⁷ According to Nussbaum, we must distinguish bare assent from full assent. Bare assent to an evaluation is merely an intellectual acceptance of it, and this is clearly possible in the absence of any emotion. When an emotion is clearly warranted, as in the case of a judgment concerning the death of a loved one, merely to give bare assent to the evaluation is to be "in a state of denial," failing properly to appreciate the judgment and so failing unequivocally to commit oneself to it.⁸ By contrast, full assent to an evaluation is an unequivocal commitment: a commitment that moves one metaphorically by resonating cognitively within one (p. 382). Thus, fully to assent to an evaluative proposition is to "allow in" that proposition, to acknowledge it "with the core of my being . . . to realize in one's being its full significance" (p. 381). It is such full assent to an evaluative proposition, Nussbaum claims, that accounts for the emotionality of emotions.

The central difficulty for Nussbaum's account is similar to that for Marks': we cannot give an account of what it is fully to assent to an evaluation without a viciously circular appeal to the emotions. After all,

⁷ See her *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 1994). In this work (especially chapter 10), Nussbaum provides a detailed interpretation of Chrysippus' theory of emotions, which she tentatively endorses by calling it "one of the most powerful candidates for truth in this area" (p. 368). For this reason, and because of the originality of her interpretation, I shall simply attribute the theory to Nussbaum herself.

⁸ *The Therapy of Desire*, p. 376; see also p. 378.

full assent must be more than decisive assent with a clear (intellectual) appreciation of the implications (cf. Nussbaum's "realize . . . its full significance"). What is needed, and what Nussbaum tries to get with her metaphors of assenting "with the core of my being," is that one feels the evaluation emotionally. Without a specification of how we are to understand such full assent non-metaphorically, Nussbaum is simply begging the question.

One intuitive way to begin to spell this idea out non-metaphorically is to appeal to the notions of pleasure and pain. Thus, to assent "with the core of my being" is to be pleased or pained by the evaluation implicit in the emotion: fear differs from a mere judgment of the presence of danger insofar as in fear one is pained by that danger, and satisfaction differs from a mere judgment of a good achieved insofar as in satisfaction one is pleased by that achievement. On the face of it, given the fundamental assumptions of cognitivism (namely that of reductivism and of the cognitive-conative divide), this intuition might seem to give rise to a second strategy for accounting for the emotionality of emotions, namely in terms of the causes or effects of the relevant beliefs and desires.

According to William Lyons:

So, for *X* to be an emotional state, *X* must include an evaluation which causes abnormal physiological changes. Both the evaluation and the physiological changes are necessary conditions for *X* being an emotional state, but neither are separately sufficient. Jointly they are.⁹

Lyons ultimately claims that what is distinctive of emotions is that the relevant beliefs and desires cause a physiological state that is felt, where this feeling, a bodily sensation, we might naturally say, is pleasant or painful.

This appeal to bodily sensations as the effect of certain beliefs and desires fails as a way of capturing the emotionality of emotions for two reasons. First, the appeal to bodily sensations fails to capture the sense in which emotions are feelings of pleasure and pain. For, as I argued in §2.2, what distinguishes an emotion like fear from the judgment concerning the presence of danger is that to feel fear is to be pained by danger – a kind of pain that is essentially intentional and evaluative. Consequently, the kind of feelings emotions essentially are, as intentional and evaluative, cannot be reduced to bodily sensations, which are non-intentional. This means that the kind of feelings that emotions essentially are cannot be understood, as cognitivists like Lyons try to do, as an

⁹ *Emotion* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 58.

afterthought, tacked on to the theory after all the evaluative work has been done.

This leads to a second criticism of this appeal to bodily sensations: this appeal makes what is distinctive about emotions as such, namely their physiological effects and the resulting sensations, be by and large irrelevant to our mental lives. In this way, emotions are relegated to the role of a mental appendix: they were useful, perhaps, in the course of our evolution, but we can get along just as well (or even better) without them. Indeed, this is roughly the explicit conclusion Jerome Shaffer draws from a consideration of emotional cognitivism in general: "It is easy enough to imagine individual lives and even a whole world in which thin would be much better if there were no emotion."¹⁰ However, I submit, any theory that cannot recognize what is distinctive of emotions as being a meaningful and essential part of our lives must be deficient as a theory of emotions.

2.3.2 The problem of rational conflict

A second major problem for emotional cognitivism concerns how we are to understand the nature of potential conflicts between emotions and judgments. Consider the following example, provided by Patricia Greenspan.¹¹ Having recently been bitten by a rabid dog, I come to be afraid of all dogs, including Fido, "A lovable old dog . . . the familiar pet of some friends." Nonetheless, I know that this fear of Fido is groundless, for even if he wanted to attack me (something I even now doubt very much given his calm, friendly disposition), he would be unable to do so given his age, arthritis, and lack of teeth. Thus, although I know that Fido is in no way dangerous to me, I am still, irrationally, afraid. The question Greenspan raises is that of how we are to understand this irrationality; this is the *problem of rational conflict*.

According to emotional cognitivism, my fear of Fido involves as a component the belief or judgment that he is dangerous; this is what I shall call a *judgmentalist* account insofar as the emotion involves assent to this proposition, an assent which, given its mind-to-world direction of

¹⁰ "An Assessment of Emotion," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 20 (1983), pp. 161–73, at p. 169.

¹¹ "Emotions as Evaluations," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 62 (1981), pp. 158–69, at pp. 162–63. For elaboration of this example and further examples, see also her "Emotions, Reasons, and 'Self-Involvement,'" *Philosophical Studies*, 38 (1980), pp. 161–68, and her *Emotions and Reasons*, especially pp. 17–20.

fit, apparently must be either a belief or a judgment. As a result of this judgmentalism, cognitivism assimilates the irrationality of the conflict between my knowledge and my fear to incoherence in judgment. This, as Greenspan rightly points out, does not make sense: conflicts between emotions and judgments do not verge on incoherence, for they are readily intelligible and happen all too often. What is needed, she claims, is a way of understanding the cognitive component of emotions without assimilating it to belief.

Greenspan's solution is to understand emotions as feelings of comfort or discomfort at a thought with the appropriate content; thus, my fear of Fido is discomfort at the thought that Fido is dangerous.¹² In appealing to the notion of a thought, Greenspan intends merely some propositional content, whether or not the subject assents to that thought. In the example of Fido, since I do not assent to the thought that Fido is dangerous, we need not understand the resulting irrationality as that of incoherence in judgment. Thus, by denying that emotions involve assents, Greenspan is offering an *anti-judgmentalist* account of emotions.

Robert Roberts provides a similar anti-judgmentalist account of emotions.¹³ According to Roberts, emotions are concern-based construals. As construals, they are ways of thinking about their objects, without necessarily involving assent. In cases like that of Fido, Roberts claims, we can understand the emotion as analogous to a perceptual illusion: an appearance that remains even after we repudiate it in judgment. Like Greenspan, then, Roberts is an anti-judgmentalist insofar as he denies that emotions necessarily involve judgments; consequently, he, too, tries to account for the irrationality of repudiated emotions without assimilating it to incoherence in judgment.

Although these anti-judgmentalist accounts clearly avoid the problem of assimilating conflicts between judgments and emotions to incoherence, it is not clear that they are thereby able to provide a proper understanding of the nature of the resulting irrationality. After all, it is

¹² Notice that this account can be understood as a solution to the problem of emotionality insofar as comfort and discomfort, as intentional and evaluative, seem to fill the role of evaluative feeling alluded to in §2.3.1. Nonetheless, Greenspan does not offer a clear account of the nature of such comfort and discomfort but relies instead merely on the intuition. As I shall argue in §2.4, such an intuition is inadequate, and an explicit account is needed that can overcome the problem of import.

¹³ See in particular his "What an Emotion Is: A Sketch," pp. 183–209. Another account of emotions similar to those offered by Greenspan and Roberts is that of Gerald F. Gaus in *Value and Justification: The Foundations of Liberal Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); I shall discuss Gaus' view explicitly in §2.4.

not at all irrational to have a stick half-submerged in water look bent even after one has judged that it is straight. If, as the anti-judgmentalist claims, the thoughts or construals emotions involve are not assented to, in what sense are they in rational conflict with judgment?

Roberts' response to this difficulty is most explicit.¹⁴ The difference between the perceptual illusion and the repudiated emotion is that although both are ways of construing one's situation, the emotional construal is based in a concern (§1.4.e):

The fear has a personal depth and life-disrupting motivational power that the illusion lacks. The bent stick is at most puzzling; the fear is personally compelling. This means that when the subject dissociates from his fear by denying its propositional content, it is like denying a part of himself, whereas denying his visual impression is not.

So, Roberts thinks, it is this personal compellingness of the emotion, a kind of motivational power, that makes intelligible its irrationality. For such motivational force runs contrary to our considered judgment and is irrational insofar as in light of our judgment it is something against which we must struggle. The irrationality of such conflicts, then, is not a cognitive irrationality, as the judgmentalist claims, but a practical one.

Nonetheless, this account of the irrationality of conflicts between emotions and judgments ultimately fails. Roberts tries to make sense of conflicts between emotions and judgments by (1) understanding how emotions can persist in the face of a judgment that repudiates them by understanding them as appearances, and (2) understanding the irrationality of persistent repudiated emotions in light of their motivational force. Both of these cannot be maintained simultaneously.

The way in which emotions motivate is not merely by disposing us to behave in a certain way; emotions are not simply brute causes, pushing or pulling us in determinate ways. Rather, emotions motivate by providing reasons for intentional action, reasons that stem from the evaluation of their targets in light of their formal objects. To see this, consider the following example.¹⁵ As I walk down the ramp to board the

¹⁴ See his "Shaped Passions: An Essay in Moral Psychology" (manuscript in progress), §1.4.d, "Emotions Without Assent." Although Greenspan's account is not so explicit, her answer seems to be essentially the same, though I shall note some differences below.

¹⁵ I take this example to be representative of the way in which emotions motivate in general, and I shall defend this view in §3.4. Nonetheless, all I need for the purposes of my argument against the anti-judgmentalists is a single case in which understanding how a repudiated emotion motivates requires understanding it as a kind of assent to the view of the world the emotion presents – an assent that cannot simply be traced to belief or judgment.

plane, I feel an intense fear of flying and so am motivated to turn around and not get on the plane. Of course, I may intellectually realize that this fear is unwarranted, that flying is one of the safest modes of transportation around, and so I repudiate my emotion. On the anti-judgmentalist account, this repudiated fear – this phobia – can be irrational only if it persists in providing a reason for action in spite of its repudiation; indeed, my fear does persist and continues to provide a powerful motivation for getting off the plane. However, the persistence of this motivation is unintelligible if we understand my repudiated fear merely in terms of the appearance of danger. For, although a repudiated appearance can persist, to repudiate it just is to undermine whatever reason it might provide for action: to believe that what one sees is a mirage is consistent with continuing to have it appear as a puddle of water but not with being motivated to go over and drink from it. That my fear in this case exists in motivating me, despite the repudiation, indicates that it not merely resents me with the appearance of danger but that I in some sense continue to assent to the presence of that danger; otherwise, I can have no reason, not even a bad one (as the repudiation would suggest), to be motivated in this way. Consequently, cognitive and practical irrationality cannot be separated as neatly as the anti-judgmentalist requires.

Of course, an anti-judgmentalist might try to save the account of motivation by appealing to a notion of desire either as a component of the emotion or as caused by it. Once such a desire is in the picture, we apparently need not worry about whether the rest of the emotion involves an assent or not. Indeed, this appeal to desire seems to be implicit in Greenspan's notions of comfort and discomfort and in Roberts' notion of a concern as the source of the way in which the emotion is personally compelling.¹⁶ Nonetheless, this misses the point. The desire at issue must be not merely, as in the Fido example, a general concern for my well-being, a concern that, according to Roberts, is the basis of my construal of Fido as dangerous, but a specific desire to avoid Fido here and now. If this specific desire is to reflect well or poorly on the emotion's warrant, it must be made rationally intelligible by the

¹⁶ See Greenspan's *Emotions and Reasons*, p. 31: "Discomfort is here construed as a state that an agent would naturally want to escape from – not itself a desire, but a source of desires, under appropriate circumstances." See also Roberts' discussion of concern in "What an Emotion Is: A Sketch," p. 202: "I use 'concern' to denote desires and aversions, and the attachments and interests from which many of our desires and aversions derive."

evaluation of my present circumstances implicit in the emotion. That is possible only if I assent to that emotional evaluation.

This criticism does not quite fit Greenspan's account. According to Greenspan, what motivates the desire is not the evaluation but the discomfort: it is rational to want to get rid of such discomfort, whatever its source. Yet on this account we still cannot make sense of the irrationality of conflicts between emotions and judgments. For how one acts on the desire to get rid of the discomfort depends not on the emotion but on other beliefs connected to it via instrumental reason. Consequently, to satisfy the desire to remove the discomfort at the thought that Fido is dangerous, in the face of the knowledge that he is completely harmless, will require not running away but rather something like removing the thought; failure to do this is irrational, but not in a way that is traceable to the emotion. Hence, on such an account, the irrationality does not lie with the emotion itself but arises from the poor way in which one copes with the emotion. So the problem of rational conflict remains unsolved.

This seems to present us with a choice between two unsatisfactory alternatives: either we must be judgmentalists and accept an overly strong conception of rational conflict between emotion and judgment, or we must be anti-judgmentalists and give up hope of accounting for such conflict. The choice, however, is a false one. The judgmentalist, correctly noting that the sort of evaluation emotions involve, as one that rationally motivates action, must involve assent, falsely concludes that emotions are judgments of a certain kind. The anti-judgmentalist, correctly noting that it is possible to have an emotion without making the corresponding judgment, falsely concludes that emotions are not assents. In each case, the conclusion presupposes the implicit premise that all assent is judgmental. The way out is to deny this premise: emotions must be understood as a kind of assent if we are to make sense of rational conflict with judgment at all, but not a kind that can be reduced to judgment if we are to make sense of that conflict as something other than incoherence.¹⁷ The idea of such distinctively emotional assent is implicit in the idea that emotions are evaluative feelings: being pleased or pained by things being

¹⁷ Roberts may seem to offer a position something like this: he sometimes talks as if the kind of construal emotions essentially are is a kind of assent, albeit an assent only of a "part of the person" but not the "whole person" (§1.4.e). Yet this does not make sense of the idea that it is the agent – the whole person – who is irrational when the repudiated emotion persists, and not merely the emotion itself.

thus and so is a kind of acceptance that things really are that way, an acceptance that falls short of full-blown judgment. The need to make sense of such distinctively emotional assent, therefore, undermines emotional cognitivism's attempts to reduce emotions to antecedently intelligible mental states of cognition and conation.¹⁸

2.4 PROBLEM OF IMPORT AND THE COGNITIVE-CONATIVE DIVIDE

If the foregoing is correct, the problems of emotionality and of rational conflict both stem from emotional cognitivism's insistence on providing a reductionist account of emotions, and so cannot be solved by emotional cognitivism thus conceived. Nonetheless, it might seem that emotional cognitivism has a way out of the problems of both emotionality and rational conflict by rejecting reductionism and so providing an account of emotions in terms of a distinctively emotional kind of cognitive or conative state. What I shall now argue is that this way out does not escape the more fundamental problem of import, a problem that cannot be solved if we accept the cognitive-conative divide.

First, let me describe this way out in more detail — one that might seem to be provided by Gerald Gaus' account of emotions.¹⁹ According to Gaus, emotions are affects (likings or dislikings) directed at some content, where these affects are caused and justified by grounding beliefs. The idea of emotions as intentional affects — as intentional feelings — might seem to provide the right sort of account of the emotionality of emotions: such intentional feelings are a kind of state that is distinctively emotional. Moreover, it might seem that Gaus can solve the problem of rational conflict as well: although emotions themselves are not assents, it is a necessary condition of their warrant that they are "grounded in" — caused by — certain beliefs that serve to justify them. Thus, Gaus says (p. 65): "If Betty fears Alf, she must not only must [*sic*] have her fear grounded in beliefs about him, but by certain relevant beliefs, that is, he is threatening or dangerous." If this belief is unjustified, then the emotion is unwarranted and so irrational, thereby explaining the conflict. Finally, Gaus attempts to give a solution to the problem of import, or

¹⁸ This notion of distinctively emotional assent, of course, needs to be worked out more fully, and I shall do so beginning in §3.1. My aim here, however, is merely to point out that the persistent problem of rational conflict can be solved if we give up on one of the fundamental tenets of emotional cognitivism.

¹⁹ See his *Value and Justification*; all page references to Gaus in the text refer to this volume.

"intrinsic value" as he calls it: "to value something (intrinsically) is to possess a dispositional emotion towards it" (p. 145; cf. p. 111).

Yet consider more carefully Gaus' solution to the problem of rational conflict. In the case of repudiated fear, Gaus still requires that one believe both that the object of the fear is dangerous (as a cause of the relevant affect) and that it is not dangerous (as the repudiating belief). To believe both these things, however, just is the kind of incoherence in judgment that an account of the irrationality of such emotions must avoid. Of course Gaus might avoid this consequence by claiming that one initially believes that something is dangerous and as a consequence comes to fear it, but only subsequently comes to believe that it is not dangerous. In this case, the subsequent belief might simply replace the initial belief (without incoherence), and yet, insofar as the emotion persists, it is still irrational because it was ill-grounded. Yet although this might be true in some cases, it is not true in all: it is entirely possible to believe from the start that Fido is harmless and feel fear nonetheless.

The real difficulty with Gaus' account, however, lies in his understanding of affect as a kind of liking or disliking, and this threatens to undermine not only the answer he provides to the problem of emotionality but also his solution to the problem of import. Gaus claims that such likings or dislikings are not themselves desires but are more generic pro- or con-attitudes that are the source of desire.²⁰ Yet this is inadequate as an account of a notion that is intended to solve the problem of import and, as I shall argue shortly, must fail.

Similar problems arise for Michael Stocker's account of emotions.²¹ According to Stocker, the difference between the fear of falling on ice and "an intellectual appreciation of those dangers [together with] a pro forma desire to avoid them" is

not given by a change in beliefs, but by a change in the emotional ways the beliefs are taken. When I am afraid, the beliefs are emotionally present, emotionally charged, and feeling-laden; when they are not, I am not afraid.²²

Such "emotionally charged" beliefs are ones we take "seriously": we "really" believe in these dangers, and we "really" want to avoid them (p. 47; cf. p. 36). Moreover, Stocker claims, we can take a thought

²⁰ Such a notion is similar to Greenspan's notion of comfort or discomfort and Roberts' notion of concern; the criticisms I offer of Gaus here apply equally well to them.

²¹ *Valuing Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 47. Notice that insofar as Stocker thinks emotions require that beliefs are present, albeit emotionally, he fails properly to solve the problem of rational conflict.

seriously — with “emotional seriousness” — without believing it — without taking it with “evidential seriousness”;²³ the difference, he insists, should be understood in terms of affect; an irreducible component of emotional thoughts to which we must appeal in making sense of these differences between intellectual and emotional thoughts. Finally, Stocker argues, it is in terms of such distinctively emotional affect that we can make sense of emotions as meaningful constituents of our lives; indeed, this is the central conclusion of his *Valuing Emotions*.

Although I agree with Stocker that we must appeal to some such notion of distinctively emotional feeling in order to account for the emotionality of emotions, I do not think we can make sense of such a feeling in the way he does. For Stocker, what distinguishes emotions from other thoughts is the way in which we attend to the relevant cognitive evaluation: whether with or without emotional seriousness, and so whether affectively or not. However, what is needed, and what Stocker fails to provide, is a clear account of the nature of this affectivity that can justify an appeal to it in order to account for emotionality. Indeed, insofar as Stocker conceives of emotional affect as a way of attending to a cognitive evaluation, he presupposes a kind of solution to the problem of import that cannot be had. For, in the context of the cognitive-conative divide, we must make sense of our evaluations as either constituting evaluations or discovering evaluations. As I shall now argue, neither of these kinds of evaluation can do the trick, thus providing a powerful motivation for rejecting the cognitive-conative divide and so, in chapter 3, to completing the sketch of the account of emotions begun in §2.2.

Nonetheless, the argument presented in this section will not, of course, be conclusive against the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide, for that assumption is too deeply entrenched in current philosophical thinking to be dislodged by any single argument. That is why I have claimed only to have motivated its rejection. In chapter 1, I argued that the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide results in a misunderstanding of the motivational and deliberative problems that undermines any attempt to give a satisfactory solution to these problems. Whether or not that is a reason to reject the cognitive-conative divide depends on whether an intelligible and satisfactory alternative is in the offing, and that is what I aim to provide in the remainder of this book.

²³ “Emotional Thoughts,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 24 (1987), 59–69, at p. 62.

As I described it in §2.1, import is a kind of worthiness imparted by a subject's concern for something. The initial need for a notion of import was motivated by the need to distinguish, within the context of the mind-body problem, genuine desire from mere goal-directedness in terms of the idea that to desire something is to find it worth pursuing. As we have seen subsequently, the notion of import is broader than merely worthiness of pursuit insofar as kinds of emotions are distinguished in large part by the kinds of import implicit in their formal objects. Nonetheless, in each case, the same problem remains: how are we to make sense of import as having a place in a world that, at least as described by modern science, seems entirely devoid of worth? My claim will be that this problem cannot be solved once we make the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide.

One way of thinking about the problem of import, a way encouraged by the cognitive-conative divide, is as a kind of Euthyphro question: do we evaluate things as good or bad because they have import, or do things have import because we evaluate them as good or bad? To answer in terms of the former is to understand the evaluations as discovering evaluations — as cognitions — and so requires locating the source of import outside these evaluations, call this the “cognitive account” of import. This answer has some intuitive appeal insofar as our evaluations can be mistaken. Thus, consider again the example given above (p. 34) of my annoyance at my exuberant dog which results from my frustrations at work being displaced onto my dog: my annoyance here is unwarranted precisely because it is not properly responsive to the imports things have for me. This is true not only of emotions but also of desires as well. Thus, I may desire things that I recognize to be not good for me, as when I feel drawn to the pack of cigarettes on the desk even though I recognize that they are injurious to my and my family's health and that money spent on cigarettes really should go toward my daughter's college savings account. Once again, the desire here is unwarranted precisely because its object is not really worth pursuing, even by my own lights. The objectivity of import in each case suggests that import is ontologically prior to our evaluations of it, thus confirming the implicit cognitivism of this first answer.²⁴

It might be objected, especially in response to this example of the desire for a cigarette, that this desire is unwarranted not because it is not

²⁴ Notice that on such an account it would be improper to describe import, as I have done, as imparted by a subject's concern.

properly responsive to the import things objectively have, as is suggested by the first answer, but rather because it conflicts with some other, more fundamental constituting evaluation, such as a desire endorsed by judgment. Moreover, import is clearly relative to the individual, insofar as what has import to me need not have import to you. This relativity again seems to suggest that import is constituted by our attitudes rather than some attitude-independent fact about us. On their own, these objections do not establish the falsity of the above cognitivist account, for they merely offer an alternative interpretation of why our evaluations are unwarranted. Nonetheless, they do raise the question of what the source of import is if not some constituting evaluation.

In the face of these objections, perhaps the most promising way for a cognitivist to spell out the source of import is to appeal to an individual's biology. Thus, as a living organism, I have certain functions that must be carried out if I am to continue living. Consequently, a cognitivist might think, particular items like food, water, and shelter have import to me — as worthy of my pursuit — in light of their contribution to my successfully carrying out these functions. Moreover, these items can vary according to the particulars of my situation and so can be appropriately relative to me. Such import therefore provides an independent standard of the warrant of desire, emotion, and judgment, enabling us to say that we make these evaluations because of the import things have for us.

This appeal to attitude-independent facts about us, however, fails as an account of import for several reasons. First, in light of the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide, it changes our understanding of desire in one of two unacceptable ways. Either we understand the responsiveness to import to be a part of desire or external to it. If the former, then desire turns out to be a cognition, not a conation: to be assessed for warrant in light of whether things have objective import just is to have mind-to-world direction of fit. This is counterintuitive, to say the least. If the latter, then we cannot distinguish between desire and mere goal-directedness and so have failed to solve the problem of import. (Of course, we could stipulate that desire is directedness towards a goal that one also simultaneously cognizes as having import, but this stipulation seems merely to be a stretch in order to save the phenomenon rather than a satisfying account of desire.)

Second, although this account may make sense of the idea that import is relative to the individual in some cases, in light of peculiarities of my circumstances, for example, it cannot account for that relativity in every

case. For some imports cannot be understood in terms of their contribution to fitness — either of myself or of my genes. After all, what contribution does my Beanie Baby collection, which I care about very much, make to my fitness? Apparently it is my caring about it, my having this attitude, that constitutes its import to me, and it is hard to square this with any cognitive account of import.

Finally, and most important, this appeal to biological fitness presupposes rather than explains import. For food, water, and shelter, as instrumentally necessary for my (or my genes') survival, are worth pursuing only insofar as my life or my genes are worth preserving, and the worth of these has simply been presupposed rather than accounted for. It might be thought that my life is important to me just by virtue of my being alive, so that biology does after all ground import. Yet this suggestion cannot work for paramacia: if we assume their lives have import to them just by virtue of their being alive, we are thereby committed to understanding their goal-directedness in service of the preservation of their lives as full-fledged desire, which is surely too strong a claim. Something must differentiate creatures like the higher mammals from creatures like paramacia in virtue of which our lives matter to us and their lives do not; clearly life itself cannot account for the difference.

This all suggests that we should try to answer the modified Euthyphro question the other way around: things have import to us because we evaluate them as good or bad. This would be to appeal to the other side of the cognitive-conative divide: to conation; call this the "conative account" of import.²⁵ On such an account, the relevant evaluations must be understood as constituting evaluations, laying down standards to which the world ought to conform. In contrast to the previous answer, this one has the advantage of making sense of the relativity of import in terms of the agent's constituting evaluations, which seemingly can be different for different agents. The difficulty, of course, lies in providing an account of such constituting evaluations.

One source of difficulty here lies in the conditions of the warrant of our conations. The above cognitive account interpreted the conditions of the warrant of desire in terms of a responsiveness to attitude-independent import. Having rejected this cognitive account in favor of a conative account, this connection between warranted conations and

²⁵ Such a conative account of import would seem best to fit Gaus', Greenspan's, and Roberts' understandings of their respective notions of liking, comfort, and concern.

import needs to be reinterpreted as follows: only warranted conations are constituting evaluations; unwarranted conations are evaluations that fail to constitute their objects as having import precisely because of their lack of warrant. Consequently, if we are to maintain the conceptual priority of our conations over import implicit in this answer to the Euthyphro question, we must find a way to articulate the conditions of the warrant of the relevant conations without reference to import as an independent object. I shall now argue that this approach fails as well.

One way to articulate such conditions of warrant is in terms of some fundamental conation that is somehow automatically warranted, such that other conations are warranted or not depending on their relation to this fundamental conation. Pleasure and pain are, plausibly, such fundamental conations, automatically constituting their causes as good or bad. There is much that is right about this intuitive appeal to pleasure and pain in an account of import, and in chapter 3 I shall provide an account of import that makes sense of this intuition. Nonetheless, aside from the difficulties of providing an account of pleasure and pain that can do the trick,²⁶ the very idea of an automatically warranted constituting evaluation is unworkable. Thus, it is common to be led by pleasure or pain to

²⁶ One way to make sense of pleasure and pain is as purely qualitative states of feeling. (See, e.g., Saul Kripke's identification of pain with an "immediate phenomenal quality," *Naming and Necessity* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980], p. 152; and George Graham's definition of phenomenal qualia in terms of pain as the paradigm case in *Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1993], p. 179.) However, such an account does not seem to get the notion of import into the picture. After all, to specify a quale in terms of its intensity, its character as burning or crushing, etc. is not yet to specify its badness. Rather, to get import into the picture we must say that the feeling itself *hurts*, where such hurting is something in addition to the phenomenal qualities of the feeling. (That hurting is conceptually distinct from the phenomenal feel is clear from the intelligibility of such cases as morphine pain, in which subjects having received morphine report that the pain no longer hurts even though what they feel remains unchanged. See A. Keats and H. Beecher, "Pain Relief by Hypnotic Doses of Barbiturates and a Hypothesis," *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*, 100 [1950], pp. 1–13. For similar claims about the way in which lobotomy can relieve pain, see J. B. Dynes and J. L. Poppen, "Lobotomy for Intractable Pain," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 140 [1949], pp. 15–19; and A. Elithorn, E. Glitherno, and E. Slater, "Leucotomy for Pain," *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry*, 21 [1958], pp. 249–61.) Faced with this difficulty, we might try to build the evaluation explicitly into the account of pleasure and pain, but doing so requires an account of the relevant sort of evaluation, and no non-question-begging account has been forthcoming. Thus, for example, Richard Hall provides an account of how pains hurt (and so are evaluative) in terms of desire, but without an independent account of desire this simply begs the question raised by the problem of import. (See Hall's, "Are Pains Necessarily Unpleasant?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 49 [1989], pp. 643–59.)

act contrary to the imports things have for us, and so we need some way of bringing the evaluations implicit in pleasure and pain into alignment with a more general evaluative framework; that is simply to undermine their status as automatically warranted.

The same goes for any other evaluative attitude: the potential for ambivalence is ever present, and such ambivalence will need to be resolved into an all-things-considered evaluation that must depend on the way these ambivalent attitudes fit into a broader holistic framework. To see this, consider again the example of a desire for a cigarette. What makes this desire unwarranted is, apparently, the way it fits into a broader context of other evaluative attitudes I have. Thus, it is because I want to promote my and my family's health as well as to save money for my daughter's college education that I come to see cigarette smoking as bad, and it is the lack of fit between my current desire for a cigarette and these background evaluations that makes it intelligible as unwarranted. The basic idea, then, is that a particular conative attitude must be assessed for warrant only in light of the other evaluations we make based on other conative attitudes.²⁷ This is a holistic account of the standards of warrant and so of these conations as constituting evaluations, and so it is in terms of the relevant holism that we can distinguish genuine desire, as potentially import constituting, from mere rationally mediated goal-directedness.²⁸

Solving the problem of import in this way in terms of constituting evaluations therefore requires articulating the interconnections among conations that define the relevant holism. These interconnections must be rational so as to account for the relevant standards of warrant. Consequently, the coherence of the pattern must be defined at least in part in terms of the content of the relevant conations.

²⁷ Notice that this way of putting the point leaves room for cognition to have a role in evaluation. Thus, it is my beliefs that cigarettes are unhealthy and expensive that make sense of the final evaluation of cigarettes as bad. This is, in effect, the kind of theory of the warrant of import-constituting affects offered by Gaus. According to Gaus, we can criticize these emotional affects, thereby potentially criticizing the import they constitute, by criticizing the cognitive content of the beliefs that ground them. (See §10.4 of his *Value and Justification*.) Nonetheless, given the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide, such beliefs, as cognitions, must be based on antecedent conations in order to make sense of the notion of a constituting evaluation and so of the current way of answering the Euthyphro question.

²⁸ This means that a creature is intelligible as having the capacity for desire only insofar as the particular occurrent instances of such conations are intelligible as potentially fitting into such a holism. I shall return to this point in more detail in chapter 3.

An appeal to instrumental rationality is helpful in articulating the relevant holism insofar as, for example, desires for ends that are instrumental to attaining other ends already constituted as worthy of pursuit are themselves warranted (other things being equal). Yet instrumental rationality on its own is insufficient, as I argued in §2.1: it simply presupposes the import of the ends and transmits that import to the means. It is similarly insufficient to appeal to a lack of conflict among the relevant conations. Thus, a chess-playing computer may have a lack of conflict within the hierarchy of its ends, and that hierarchy can be defined in part by instrumental rationality; yet none of this argues for the computer having genuine desires as opposed to mere goal-directedness. In part, this is because such a lack of conflict – such *negative coherence* – even in conjunction with instrumental rationality, is possible among even arbitrary sets of conations and so cannot tell us how to resolve cases of conflict by identifying which of the conflicting conations is unwarranted. Although a failure of coherence indicates that at least one conation in the pattern is unwarranted, that does not mean that the absence of that failure is what makes these conations warranted.

Harry Frankfurt has tried to combine the appeal to a fundamental conation with negative coherence to provide an account of import.²⁹ The basic idea is that *second-order volitions* – desires that some desire to act be our will – that do not conflict with any other second-order (or higher-order) volitions constitute what has import for us. The basic motivation for this view is that a second-order volition is, in effect, a self-conscious endorsement of the action, whereby we identify ourselves with it; the negative coherence is necessary to ensure that we are “wholehearted” in this identification and so of a single mind concerning it. However, this account fails as a general response to the problem of import, for the appeal to second-order volitions is meant by Frankfurt to be what distinguishes persons from mere animals, whereas the problem of import is a problem that arises for the higher mammals, like dogs and monkeys, just as much as for persons. Thus, the point of the appeal to import is to articulate a feature that distinguishes such higher animals from things like paramecia and chess-playing computers, which are capable merely of goal-directedness. Frankfurt’s aim, therefore, is to provide an account not of import in general but of a kind of import

²⁹ See his *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), and his “The Faintest Passion,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the APA*, 66 (1992), pp. 5–16.

distinctive of persons, and his account therefore presupposes a solution to this general problem.³⁰

In order to articulate the relevant holism so as to make clear how it can ground the conditions of the warrant of conation, therefore, we need to appeal instead to a *positive coherence*: a principle that holds these conations together non-arbitrarily. Yet how else can we make sense of such a principle if not by appeal to instrumental rationality, negative coherence, or self-conscious endorsement? If this account of import in terms of conation is to succeed, we must be able to articulate such a principle without reference to import; otherwise, we give up on the world-to-mind direction of fit required by the assumption of the cognitive–conative divide. Here we seem to be caught in a bind, however. On the one hand, with such a restriction in place, the resources we are left with seem inadequate to account for the kind of positive coherence necessary for an account of the standards of warrant. On the other hand, if we give up on the restriction, we have a natural candidate for such positive coherence, namely import itself. That is, these conations can be understood to be warranted quite simply in terms of the prior import of their common object, and it is in this way that these conations form a broader pattern that is non-arbitrary. Yet such an appeal to import seems to return us, unhappily, to the apparently failed cognitivist account of import.

In the context of the assumption of the cognitive–conative divide, these two choices offered by the modified Euthyphro question seem mutually exclusive and exhaustive. In particular, it seems, we cannot have it both ways: true both that evaluations are warranted because their objects have import and that an object has import because we evaluate it as good or bad. To a proponent of the cognitive–conative divide, this sounds viciously circular, for, if import is what grounds the warrant of our conations, then import must have a kind of priority that is inconsistent with its also being constituted by these conations. This inconsistency might be traced to differing conceptions, implicit in the choices offered by the modified Euthyphro question, of the ontological status of import as objective or subjective. Thus, if we allow that our evaluations

³⁰ The same basic criticism applies as well to other attempts to leverage the moral psychology of persons to provide meta-ethical accounts of value; see, e.g., Allan Gibbard’s *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Simon Blackburn’s *Ruling Passions*, and Christine Korsgaard’s “The Sources of Normativity,” in Grethe Peterson, ed., *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 15 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994). There are other problems with Frankfurt’s account, which I shall discuss in chapters 5, 6 and 8.

are warranted because their objects have import, that requires that import have an objective status as an independent standard that is ontologically and conceptually prior to these evaluations. Conversely, if we allow that our evaluations constitute import, that requires that import have a subjective status as projected by, and so ontologically and conceptually posterior to, these evaluations. So, it seems that we have two and only two options for solving the problem of import, and neither is satisfactory; hence the bind.

Nonetheless, we can find a way out of this bind if we reject the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide. What makes this possible is an alternative conception of the objectivity and subjectivity of import that allows us to have our cake and eat it too.

To see this, consider three different kinds of ontological status something might have as more or less objective or subjective. First is the objectivity of primary qualities, which is independent of possible experiences of subjects. Second is the status of secondary qualities, which are *perspectively subjective* in the sense that their existence is intelligible only in terms of their being the objects of a certain sort of awareness, a certain perspective on the world.³¹ For example, for something to be red is for it to be such that people generally ought to see it as red, and what it is to be red is not intelligible apart from such visual experiences. Thus, in contrast to primary qualities, there is a sense in which we might say that secondary qualities do not "really" exist, for if we were to transcend the perspective afforded by our experiences we would be unable to make sense of their existence. Nonetheless, this would be misleading insofar as, given the possibility of the relevant experiences, secondary qualities are objects we might discover, or mistakenly seem to discover, in the world.

Finally, at the most subjective end of the scale (where it scarcely makes sense to speak of an object at all), something may be *projected* onto the world in the sense that its existence depends entirely on particular mental states of the subject. This kind of subjectivity applies most straightforwardly to those properties reflective of one's preferences. Chocolate ice-cream is (now, for me) better than vanilla ice-cream, because that is what I currently prefer; if in the future I instead have a craving for vanilla, then vanilla would (then) be better than chocolate. Here the claim that one is better than the other is simply a matter of my

³¹ This account of perspectival subjectivity and its relevance to understanding the ontological status of import owes much to McDowell's "Values and Secondary Qualities."

projecting my present preferences onto the world. In contrast to this kind of subjectivity, secondary qualities are clearly more objective because they are not relative to persons or occasions. We cannot make sense of something's being red to me here and now apart from its being red *simpliciter*, for the standards in terms of which we evaluate color experience hold intersubjectively irrespective of circumstances. Consequently, the colors things in fact have are conceptually prior to particular color experiences: seeing it as red does not make it red. This priority is what makes intelligible the kind of objectivity that secondary qualities have (in contrast to projected qualities), even though secondary qualities are not intelligible as conceptually prior to such experiences generally.

How, then, does import fit into these kinds of objectivity and subjectivity? Roughly, the idea is this. First, we can accommodate what is right about the idea that things have import because we evaluate them as good or bad by understanding import to be perspectively subjective: something's having import is intelligible only in light of a subject's evaluative perspective. Of course, in contrast to secondary qualities, import can be relative to the individual, and is in this way more subjective than secondary qualities. This might lead one to suspect that import must be merely projected and so not perspectively subjective. Nonetheless, all that is required to make sense of the relativity of import is that we understand the relevant evaluative perspective to be that of the individual subject. Such a perspective is constituted not by particular evaluations (such as, according to the conative account of import, constituting evaluations) but rather by a broader pattern in our evaluative attitudes.³² This is to reject the idea, implicit in the cognitive account of import, that import is ontologically and rationally prior to our (discovering) evaluations.

What is interesting about this appeal to the pattern as a whole that constitutes the evaluative perspective is that patterns can continue to exist even in the presence of gaps or anomalies in the pattern. Thus, a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is still Beethoven's Fifth even if the horn player miscounts and misses her solo entirely or the bassoonist mischievously plays his entire part in the wrong key. Indeed,

³² Note the shift in vocabulary away from "cognition" and "conation" that marks my rejection of the cognitive-conative divide: by "evaluative attitudes" I intend not only our desires and emotions but also our evaluative judgments, and I shall argue in subsequent chapters for a conception of all of these for which the notion of a direction of fit, with its assumption of rational and ontological priority, does not apply.

no single note is sacrosanct, such that in its absence the piece would no longer be Beethoven's Fifth; rather, each note, taken one by one, is expendable without destroying the overall pattern, so long as not too many notes are missing or out of place. Analogously, each particular evaluative attitude that is an element of the pattern constitutive of the relevant evaluative perspective, taken one by one, is expendable without destroying the pattern (or the import it constitutes), so long as not too many such evaluative attitudes are missing or misdirected. This means, second, we can accommodate what is right about the idea that our evaluations are warranted because their objects have import: insofar as import is constituted by the whole pattern, and insofar as each evaluative attitude that is an element of that pattern is expendable, import is rationally prior to the warrant of each particular evaluative attitude and so can serve as a standard of warrant for each. In this way, we can understand import as objective in the sense of being not projected by particular conations, thus rejecting the idea, implicit in the conative account of import, that particular (constituting) evaluations are ontologically and rationally prior to import.

In short, if we are to provide an adequate solution to the problem of import, we must appeal to a kind of holism that rejects both the assumption that the world is ontologically prior to our cognitions and the assumption that our conations are ontologically prior to the world, assumptions built into the cognitive-conative divide.

2.5 CONCLUSION

It should be clear that the discussion in the last few paragraphs has been largely schematic, and the argument against the assumption of the cognitive-conative divide is so far inconclusive, relying as it does on contestable intuitions at various points about the inadequacy of purely cognitive or purely conative accounts. Nonetheless, the argument is highly suggestive, and it clearly motivates the attempt to find an alternative account of emotions and so of import. The success of this argument rejecting the cognitive-conative divide therefore depends ultimately on the success of this alternative – not just as a solution to the problem of import, but also as a solution to the motivational and deliberative problems discussed in chapter 1.

Part of what falls with the cognitive-conative divide is the appeal of emotional cognitivism and its attempt to provide an account of emotions

as compound states of cognition, conation, and bodily sensation. Moreover, with the rejection of the cognitive-conative divide goes as well one of the most powerful objections against the account of emotions I outlined in §2.2. My claim there was that emotions are evaluative feelings in the sense that they are a distinctive kind of passive assent to their targets as having the import defined by their formal objects, and I have described such passive assents as feelings of pleasure and pain: to be afraid is to be pained by danger, to feel hope is to be pleased by the prospects for success, to feel frustration is to be pained by repeated failure to attain some good, etc. This appeal to pleasure and pain is intended to make three points: first concerning the way in which emotions, as passive assents to import, are evaluations of a kind that differs from evaluative judgment; second concerning the way in which emotions motivate subsequent action; and third concerning how emotions feel – their phenomenology. Implicit in this appeal to pleasure and pain is the idea that emotions are unitary and not compound states of evaluative feeling, states involving elements of both cognition and conation simultaneously.

My aim in chapter 3, therefore, will be to fill in and provide further arguments for this outline of theories both of emotions as evaluative feelings and of import in terms of holistic patterns of evaluative attitudes. In part, the strategy will be to articulate a kind of rational commitment that defines a broader pattern among our evaluative attitudes, in particular our emotions. Such rational commitments, I shall argue, provide the sort of positive coherence necessary for the resulting pattern of evaluative attitudes to constitute import. Moreover, I shall argue that these evaluative attitudes become intelligible as the evaluative attitudes they are – as emotions, desires, etc. – only because of the possibility of their fitting into such patterns constitutive of import. In this way, our evaluative attitudes and import emerge together as a part of a conceptual package, neither of which is prior to the other.

equally justifiable, then moral norms would be relative to particular moral communities. Consequently, it is a contingent fact, if it is a fact at all, whether or not there are any universal moral norms, dependent as they must be on the kind of values we can justifiably get ourselves to be.

What, then, can be said of the latter case of a moral skeptic who rejects any such characterization of human experience as definitive of interpersonal values? In what sense can we say that moral norms apply to her? To be such a creature, we might think, is to refuse to acknowledge an evaluatively rich conception of what it is to be a person, and so is to live an impoverished life as no longer really a person at all. Here, perhaps, the best we can say is that she is simply missing out on the kinds of goods that come with being a person in this richer sense of being a moral agent — goods such as friendship, trust, and love. She therefore has reasons to be different than she is, even if she is, by virtue of the kind of evaluative perspective she currently has, wholly blind to these reasons.⁴

This sketch of an account of both friendship and moral values is, of course, all too brief. Nonetheless, it does provide a reorientation to our conception of properly moral psychology. For we might think of what happens when a creature comes to be a moral agent, by virtue of her having a proper upbringing or of her undergoing a kind of conversion from moral skepticism, as her becoming a *friend of humanity* and so a member of this most general community of valuers. Consequently, it begins to provide some insight in light of the nature of such friendship into the way in which we can deliberate with each other about value and so assert moral claims on each other. For a central and legitimate part of such conversations can be attempts to play on and mold one another's sympathies; this is the sort of conversation about values non-cognitivists like Allan Gibbard and Simon Blackburn are after,⁵ though we can now understand it to be not merely arational manipulation but rather a part of the give and take of reasons within relationships of mutual respect and trust.

⁴ Cf. John McDowell's "Might there be External Reasons?" in J. E. J. Altham and Ross Harrison, ed., *World, Mind, and Ethics: Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 387–98.

⁵ Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*; Blackburn, *Ruling Passions*.

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