

## What is evaluable for fit?

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This is an early draft. Comments are very welcome.

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Our beliefs, intentions, desires, regrets, and fears are evaluable for fit—they can succeed or fail to be fitting responses to the objects they are about. Can our headaches and heartbeats be evaluable for fit? The common view says ‘no’.<sup>1</sup> I will argue: sometimes, yes.

To get a sense of what I have in mind, consider Darwin’s description of a frightened man.

The frightened man at first stands like a statue motionless and breathless, or crouches down as if instinctively to escape observation. The heart beats quickly and violently, so that it palpitates or knocks against the ribs ...the skin instantly becomes pale, as during incipient faintness ...That the skin is much affected under the sense of great fear, we see in the marvelous and inexplicable manner in which perspiration immediately exudes from it. This exudation is all the more remarkable, as the surface is then cold, and hence the term a cold sweat ... The hairs also on the skin stand erect; and the superficial muscles shiver. In connection with the disturbed action of the heart, the breathing is hurried. The salivary glands act imperfectly; the mouth becomes dry ... One of the best-marked symptoms is the trembling of all the muscles of the body; and this is often first seen in the lips. From this cause, and from the dryness of the mouth, the voice becomes husky or indistinct, or may altogether fail. (Darwin 1872/2009, 290–291)

My initial case against the common view asks: given that fear is evaluable for fit, why not the various bodily episodes and sensations that accompany fear? I then consider and resist various answers to this question.

The structure of the argument is simple, but I arrive to the subject of fit-evaluability in a roundabout way. There is a tendency in contemporary discussions of fittingness to focus on fitting *attitudes* to the exclusion of other possible candidates for fit-evaluation. I think this tendency is a consequence of the role attitudes have come to play in discussions of responsibility and rationality, as well as debates about reasons. Specifically, norms of rationality and justification for which one can be

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<sup>1</sup> The common view is usually not expressed in terms of fit, but in terms of rationality, justification, or reasons: the view is that sensations and bodily episodes are not evaluable by standards of rationality, justification, or reasons. (I prefer the notion of fit for reasons that will become clear later on.) Often, the view makes its appearance when authors contrast states that are rational or reasons-responsive with certain bodily episodes and sensations. Scanlon (1998, 20) contrasts belief and intention with hunger, tiredness, and distraction; Moran (2001, 114) contrasts desires we can reason to with hunger or fatigue; Boyle (2011, 22) says we can reason to belief with but not to pain; Brady (2018, 81) contrasts rational emotions with experiences of coldness, tiredness, hunger, nausea, and irritation; and Neta (2018, 289) contrasts conspiring, concluding, resenting, and fearing with feeling tired, craving Doritos, and having an itch on your elbow. This is a small selection; there are many, many more examples of the common view. That hunger, tiredness, and pains are non-rational is considered a truism not worth arguing for.

held responsible (in some sense) are thought to apply primarily, if not exclusively, to attitudes. I will challenge this assumption, attempt to explain and disarm its appeal, and suggest that various sensations, feelings, and bodily episodes are fit-evaluable when and because they are explained as such by fit-evaluable narratives.

I begin, in section 1, by drawing the distinction between rationally evaluable items and non-rational items. I recount what is often said of our evaluative practices in order to distinguish the kinds of items that fall in each category. Then, in section 2, I offer an initial case against the common description of our evaluative practices: I argue that according to our evaluative practices, an accelerated heartrate is rationally evaluable when associated with one's fear. In section 3, I consider and reject the objection that I misdescribe our evaluative practices. In section 4, I argue that the common description of our evaluative practices is informed by questionable theoretical assumptions. Particularly, it seems to be widely assumed that whether a physical or mental phenomenon is fit-evaluable on a particular occasion is determined by the type of phenomenon it is. In section 5, I suggest an alternative whereby the same type of phenomenon can be fit-evaluable on one occasion but not on another. What explains the difference, I argue, is that in the former occasion the phenomenon is explained by the agent's fit-evaluable narrative and in the latter occasion it is not.

## **1. The common view of rationally evaluable and non-rational items**

Philosophers distinguish (1) things that are subject to, or assessable by, norms of rationality and justification and (2) things that are not. I will refer to things falling under (1) as *rationally evaluable items* and to things falling under (2) as *non-rational items*. How to analyze the distinction is controversial and various accounts of it have been offered, but there is a general agreement on what falls on each side of the distinction. Consider the following lists, divided according to what I will call *the common view of the distinction*.

LIST 1. Rationally evaluable items:

Believing an online-meeting starts at 11am, dreading the meeting, intending to join the meeting, joining the meeting, coming to the conclusion that the meeting had started at 10:30am, regretting that you didn't double check the meeting time, and apologizing for your late arrival.

LIST 2. Non-rational items:

Feeling tired, having an itch on your chin, being hungry, experiencing a warm glow, feeling nauseous or dizzy, having a headache, digesting, sensing your heartrate accelerating, and your heartrate accelerating.

LIST 1 includes paradigmatic examples of rationally evaluable kinds, such as actions (joining the meeting), beliefs (believing the meeting starts at 11am) and intentions (intending to join the meeting). The list also includes emotions (dreading the meeting, regretting you didn't double check the meeting time). The view that at least some emotions are rationally evaluable is somewhat more controversial than the view that intentions and beliefs are rationally evaluable, and yet it is widely accepted. LIST 2 includes items that are almost universally thought to be non-rational, such as hunger, headaches, and heartrates.

My first goal is to dispute the way the distinction is normally applied, as illustrated by LIST 1 and LIST 2; I will argue that hunger, headaches, and heart rates can sometimes be rationally evaluable. My second goal is to make sense of the distinction in light of my first thesis. But first, consider what is often said of our evaluative practices in order to distinguish the kinds of items in LIST 1 from those in LIST 2. I summarize seven, generally agreed upon and closely related characteristics of rationally evaluable items. With regard to each I explain how it leads to the common application of the distinction.

- a. **Rationally evaluable items are items to which we normally apply norms of rationality and justification.** Our evaluative practices suggest that it makes sense to ask whether a person's belief that the meeting starts at 11am and her intention to join the meeting are rational and justified. We thus evaluate beliefs and intentions according to norms of rationality and justification. We also ask such questions and make such evaluations with respect to emotions, such as guilt, admiration, anger, pride, etc. However, it does not make sense, according to our evaluative practices, to evaluate a person's headache or heart rate by applying to them norms of rationality or justification, so headaches and heart rates are non-rational.
- b. **Rationally evaluable items are items for which we normally seek and offer reasons-for-which explanations.** According to our evaluative practices, you might intelligibly ask why I dread the meeting in the specific sense of asking for the reason *in light of which* I dread the meeting.<sup>2</sup> But it would not be intelligible to ask me for the reason in light of which I am tired or dizzy. Though my tiredness and dizziness can, in principle, be explained, they cannot be rationalized or justified. So rationally evaluable items are items that can be given an explanation that is not merely causal; they may be given a *reasons-for-which* explanation, which shows whether the agent conforms with norms of rationality and justification (Nolfi 2015, 43–44).
- c. **Rationally evaluable items are items we normally expect to be judgment-sensitive.** According to our evaluative practices, rationally evaluable items are answerable to the agent's judgments: their presence or absence is dependent on the presence or absence of the relevant evaluative judgments (Moran 2017, 144). My belief that the meeting starts at 11am should change when, after joining the meeting, I come to the conclusion that the meeting had started at 10:30am. Similarly, I should change my intention to join the meeting if I judge that there is no reason for me to attend it after all. By contrast, it is not a rational failure on my part that my headache persists despite my judgment that it is bad nor do we expect my heart rate to drop simply because I cannot explain its sudden acceleration. Sometimes this point is put by saying that rationally evaluable items are 'judgment sensitive': they depend on a rational agent's judgments about normative reasons (Scanlon 1998, 20).

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<sup>2</sup> Neta 2018 draws the distinction between non-rational and rationally evaluable "conditions" by noting that with regard to some conditions there could be no *reasons in light of which* a person is in them: "there can be a reason why the agent suffers from tinnitus, or feels tired, but no reason in light of which she suffers from tinnitus, or feels tired, etc." (289).

- d. **Rationally evaluable items are items we can normally reason to.** According to our evaluative practices, rationally evaluable items need not result from reasoning but they can, in principle, be reasoned to, and if challenged one should be disposed to reason to them (e.g., Smith 2005, McHugh 2017). My apology upon realizing that I was late to the meeting need not result from a process of practical reasoning, but if someone asked why I apologized I should be able to provide the reasoning that leads to my apology, or to my decision to apologize. Pamela Hieronymi captures this point by saying that “an intention to  $\phi$  embodies one’s answer to the question of whether to  $\phi$ ”, which makes one vulnerable to “questions and criticisms that would be satisfied by reasons that (one takes to) bear positively on whether to  $\phi$ ” (Hieronymi 2009, 138–139). Conor McHugh makes a similar point about the relation between belief and the reasoning that supports it:

If your visual experience causes you to acquire the belief that the wall is white, but you are in no way disposed to reason from the belief that the wall looks white to the belief that it is white—should your belief that it is white be challenged, say—then you don’t count as basing the latter belief on the former, and thus as responding to the putative reason given by its content (McHugh 2017, 2757).

When a person is tired or hungry there can be no similar pressure because such states cannot be reasoned *to*. To be sure, one can reason to the *intention to bring about* or *prevent* states of tiredness and hunger, but one cannot reason to tiredness and hunger as such.

- e. **Rationally evaluable items are normally attributable to the agent.** According to our evaluative practices, rationally evaluable items reveal the agent’s evaluative point of view and therefore reveal something about the agent’s mind or self (Hieronymi 2014, 16). My dread of the meeting reveals that I view it as threatening and my intention to join the meeting reveal that I view it as worth joining despite the threat I take it to pose. Similarly, although I say that the dog is not dangerous, my fear can reveal that I view it as dangerous indeed. Moreover, even if I sincerely judge that the dog poses no danger, the fact that my fear persists indicates a failure of rationality due to a conflict within my evaluative perspective. Thus, our rationally evaluable attitudes express our evaluations of their objects. As such, they are *attributable* to us in a way that non-rational items are not. An itch, perspiration, or a rash, do not reveal a person’s evaluative perspective nor anything else about the person’s mind or self. In this respect, non-rational sensations and bodily episodes are like any other event or condition that is not attributable to an agent: the rotation of the earth, the sunlight entering the room through the window, the room temperature, the breaking of the glass, the stain on the carpet. In some of these cases, agents can be held responsible for bringing about or not preventing these events and conditions, but these events and conditions are not *of* the agents in the way that the intention to bring them about or prevent them is.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Moran (2001) writes:

Some desires, such as those associated with hunger or sheer fatigue, may be experienced by the person as feelings that simply come over him. They simply happen. On some occasions their occurrence may be inexplicable to him, and their inexplicability in such cases need not diminish their force. Like an alien intruder, they must simply be responded to, even if one doesn’t understand what they’re doing there or what the sense of their demands is. The person’s stance toward such desires, and how he deals with them, may be little different from his stance toward any other empirical phenomenon he confronts. From his angle, a brute

- f. **Only attitudes are fundamentally rationally evaluable.** Reflection on our evaluative practices has led many to believe that all rationally evaluable items are explained by rationally evaluable *attitudes* (and only rationally evaluable attitudes are not explained by other kinds of rationally evaluable items). This is the thesis that *only attitudes are fundamentally rationally evaluable*. Actions, for example, are said to be rationally evaluable only when and because they are expressions of rationally evaluable intentions, which are rationally evaluable attitudes (Scanlon 1998, 21). To insist that I spilled the coffee unintentionally is to reject the demand to justify spilling the coffee by insisting that my action was not intentional and therefore not rationally evaluable (Anscombe 1957). So the distinction between what is rationally evaluable and what is non-rational is often described as a distinction between *rationally evaluable attitudes* and *non-rational attitudes, feelings, moods, sensations, and bodily episodes*. It is important to note here that according to this common view, nothing physical—no movement or occurrence in the body—is itself rationally evaluable; physical movements and occurrences are only rationally evaluable as guises of rationally evaluable attitudes. Moreover, many mental states are also non-rational. So there is a question about which mental states fall on either side of the distinction.<sup>4</sup>
- g. **Rationally evaluable items are items that can be evaluated as fitting.** Our evaluative practices suggest that rationally evaluable attitudes can be fitting or unfitting to what they are about—they can be evaluable for fit. Fit is a normative relation between an attitude and what it is about. Different types of attitudes are individuated by the kinds of things that *merit* them or that they are *fitting* to. Fear is fitting to (or is merited by) what is fearsome, admiration is fitting to (or merited by) what is admirable, belief is fitting to (or merited by) what is credible, and desire is fitting to (or merited by) what is desirable. It is generally assumed that all rationally evaluable attitudes are fit-evaluable and that most if not all things fit-evaluable are attitudes.<sup>5</sup> However, sensations, pains, and conditions such as fatigue or thirst are neither fit-evaluable nor rationally evaluable. This explains the focus on fitting attitudes in the burgeoning philosophical literature on fit.

## 2. The initial case against the common view

The correct description of our evaluative practices does not, by itself, settle the question of which items are rationally evaluable. However, if we normally treat a certain item as rationally evaluable this is strong *prima facie* reason to hold that it is in fact rationally evaluable. To argue that, contrary to our evaluative practices, the item in question is non-rational, one must provide some strong

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desire is a bit of reality for the agent to accommodate, like a sensation, or a broken leg, or an obstacle in one's path. (115)

<sup>4</sup> Kate Nolfi argues that whether mental states of type M are rationally evaluable turns on whether human subjects are cognitively constituted such that a subject's conception of which considerations constitute rationalizing or justifying reasons for being in a mental state of type M is automatically and unreflectively efficacious in shaping the cognitive mechanisms that actually regulate the subject's mental states of type M (Nolfi 2015). Nolfi therefore shares the assumption I will later question, namely, that rational evaluability is a property of types of items. She does not consider the possibility that the cognitive mechanisms that regulate the subject's mental states of type M can be different on different occasions, such that sometimes they are shaped by the subject's conception of rationalizing or justifying reasons and sometimes not.

<sup>5</sup> Howard 2018 suggests actions can be evaluable for fit.

reason against the apparent force of our practices. Alternatively, one can dispute the accepted interpretation of our evaluative practices and argue that we do not treat the item in question as rationally evaluable after all.

Consider the example of grief. Stephen Wilkinson argues that grief is non-rational by appealing to our evaluative practices (Wilkinson 2000). He claims that lack of normal grief in response to loss does not strike us as a rational failure as long as one's beliefs and desires are rational and justified. By contrast, Donald Gustafson argues that, contrary to our evaluative practices, grief is always irrational. Gustafson appeals to a theory of rationality according to which a rational state must enable the agent to realize states of affairs she desires; he then argues that grief fails to do so (Gustafson 1989). Responses to these and similar arguments contest Wilkinson's interpretation of our evaluative practices regarding grief (Jollimore 2004) as well as Gustafson's theoretical assumptions about rationality (Cholbi 2017, Marušić 2018, Moller forthcoming).

Despite the aforementioned debates—and perhaps as a result of them—the common view today is that grief is rationally evaluable and that this is supported both by our evaluative practices and by commonly accepted theoretical assumptions about rationality and justification.<sup>6</sup> I, too, share the view the grief is rationally evaluable, but I think we should go even further and maintain that, for example, headaches, sleeplessness, and loss of appetite that normally accompany grief (or that are elements of grief) are also rationally evaluable. To argue for this departure from the common view, I first dispute the common depiction of our evaluative practices and then question the theoretical assumptions that underlie it.

Start with the following example: your heartrate. According to the common view of rationally evaluable items, both the bodily episode and the feeling of your heart racing are non-rational. Consider characteristics (a) to (g) with respect to the case of your heart racing after running to catch the bus. (a) It makes little sense, according to our evaluative practices, to *evaluate the rationality* or *justification* of your accelerated heartrate after running; (b) our evaluative practices suggest that while there is a clear cause there is no *reason in light of which* your heart is accelerating in this case; (c) according to our evaluative practices we should not expect your heartrate to decrease in response to changes in your evaluative judgments, so it is not *judgment-sensitive*; (d) we also do not suppose that you must be able, if challenged, to *reason to* your accelerated heartrate; (e) we are not inclined to view your racing heart as an expression of your *evaluative point of view* nor do we *attribute* it to you in the way we attribute your intention or regret to you; (f) your heartrate and your experience of it are not *attitudes* and they are not explained as rationally evaluable by rationally evaluable attitudes; (g) your heartrate and your experience of it are not evaluable for fit. So far, the common view is correct: in the running-for-the-bus case, your racing heart as well as your sensation of your racing heart are non-rational.

Now consider a different example: **the bear encounter case**. It is a dark night and you have been camping alone in the woods. As you fall asleep near the campfire, you hear a noise, turn around, and see a bear standing over you. The bear is examining you, looking you up and down. In any moment, he might strike you and it will all be over. Your heart is racing. In fact, your heart is

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<sup>6</sup> But the idea that grief is rationally evaluable has also given rise to theoretical questions about the expiration of reasons and the temporality of fit. See Moller 2007, forthcoming; Marusic 2018, forthcoming; Na'aman 2019; Schönherr forthcoming.

beating at the exact same pace as it was beating after you ran to catch the bus: you are in a very different predicament but have the very same heartrate.

I begin my push against the common view by making an initial case that your accelerated heartrate upon facing the bear is rationally evaluable: it has crucial characteristics of a rationally evaluable item and gives us reason to revise other purported characteristics of rationally evaluable items. Let me consider each characteristic in turn.

(a) It should be uncontroversial that the fear you experience as you face the bear is rationally evaluable. Indeed, your fear might very well be both rational and justified since you are in fact in great danger. Your racing heart might be considered a component of your fear or an entirely distinct phenomenon, but in either case your racing heart seems rational and justified in response to the bear for the same reasons that your fear is rational and justified.

(b) There seems to be a reason in light of which your heart is racing: you are in great danger. To see this, consider whether it is possible to *ignore* the reason for your racing heart. Start, again, with fear. I might take sedatives to extinguish my fear of climate change and doing so might be effective, but it would ignore the reason for my fear and the fact that my fear is justified and fitting. The same would be true if we were to give you sedatives to bring your heartrate down: we would be ignoring the reason in light of which your heart is pounding. So there is a reason-for-which explanation of your accelerated heartrate; it is the same as the reasons-for-which explanation of your fear.

(c) As in the case of fear, we should expect your heartrate to decrease upon judging that you are out of danger or that the bear is not dangerous after all (if, e.g., the bear turns out to be your friend in a very realistic bear costume). Your racing heart is as much a reflection of your judgment as your fear is. So your racing heart in facing the bear is judgment-sensitive.

(d) If your fear is challenged, you should be able to reconstruct the reasoning that leads to it—e.g., the bear is only a few feet away and might kill me in one stroke, so I'm in great danger. Adopting Hieronymi's terminology, we can say that fear of the bear embodies one's answer to the question of whether the bear poses a danger to oneself. Therefore, reasoning to the judgment that the bear poses a danger to oneself is reasoning to one's fear. It is arguable that one's racing heart in response to the bear is *also* an embodiment of one's answer to the question of whether the bear poses a danger. If that is so, then you can reason to your racing heart in the very same way that you reason to your fear.

(e) We *are* inclined to view your racing heart in this case as an expression of your evaluative point of view and to attribute it to you in the same way we attribute your fear to you. Just like your fear, so your perspiration, shivers, and racing heart express your understanding and appreciation of your predicament. Another indication that we attribute these responses to you is the fact that if your shivers, perspiration, and racing heart continue after the bear has gone away, we might appropriately *reason with you* to persuade you that you are no longer in danger. Since we take your physical symptoms to be justified in response to perceived danger, and we take you to be rational, we expect these symptoms to go away once you judge that you are out of danger.

(f) It is true that your racing heart and your sensation of it are not themselves attitudes. However, the fact that they bear crucial characteristics of rationally evaluable items and that in the bear encounter case they are closely associated with the attitude of fear, suggests that there is a connection between the rational evaluability of bodily episodes and sensations and the rational evaluability of attitudes. I consider this connection in section 5.

(g) If only attitudes are fit-evaluable then your racing heart, which is not an attitude, is not fit-evaluable. However, in light of the fact that your racing heart bears many characteristics of fit-evaluable items, the following possibilities should be considered. First, it is possible that things other than attitudes are fit-evaluable. Second, perhaps bodily episodes and sensations are fit-evaluable when and because they stand in a certain relation to attitudes that are fit-evaluable. Again, more on this in section 5.

This concludes my initial case for the claim that our evaluative practices treat at least some bodily episodes and sensations as sometimes rationally evaluable. It is worth noting that the example we have been considering is by no means an outlier. Our rationally evaluable attitudes are often accompanied by bodily episodes, conditions, and sensations that seem to be as rationally evaluable as the attitudes they accompany. Our evaluative practices do not normally draw the distinction, commonly drawn by philosophers, between attitudes and other mental and physical states and events. It is therefore striking that the expansive philosophical literature on rationally evaluable attitudes rarely considers such cases and assumes that only attitudes are rationally evaluable. By considering objections to my initial case, we will find a possible explanation for this widespread neglect.

### **3. Against rationally evaluable heartrates: false to our evaluative practices**

As far as I can tell, the only discussion in recent literature of cases such as the bear encounter case appears in Angela Smith's work.<sup>7</sup> In formulating her rational relations account of responsibility for attitudes, Smith argues that "nonintentional mental states, such as physical pains, sensations, and physiological conditions such as hunger or thirst ... are not rationally sensitive to our evaluative judgments or our wider cognitive and evaluative commitments" (Smith 2005, 257). Smith goes on to consider a possible objection:

One might object here that many of these physical states do, in fact, seem to be directly connected to our evaluative judgments. The nausea that I feel before having to speak in public, for example, seems to be a direct result of my evaluative judgment that such public performances are both important and also fraught with opportunities for failure. The butterflies that I feel in my stomach before boarding a roller-coaster also seem to be a direct result of my evaluative judgment that such a ride is scary and somewhat dangerous. Does it follow on my account, then, that these physical states are also attributable to me for purposes of moral assessment? (257–258)

In response, Smith insists that "The relation between a person's physical states and her evaluative judgments is purely causal" and therefore our responsibility for these states "flows from the

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<sup>7</sup> However, below I mention Jennifer Corns's related discussion of the rational evaluability of pleasantness and unpleasantness (Corns 2019). If there are other relevant discussions that I have failed to notice, I'd be very gratefully to conference participants for calling my attention to them.



responsibility we have for the evaluative judgments which constitute their causal triggers” (258). This explanation of the phenomenon makes it compatible with the view that only attitudes are rationally evaluable but it does not constitute a reason to endorse this view. Why explain away the apparent rational evaluability of physical episodes and sensations? More specifically, given that certain physical episodes and sensations seem to have the characteristics of rationally evaluable items, what reason do we have to insist that they are merely caused?

Smith specifies characteristics of rationally evaluable items that, she claims, physical states lack. Appealing to our evaluative practices, Smith points out that when the causal connection between our evaluative judgments and our physical states fails, we are not thereby open to rational criticism. However, imagine a person feeling fitting fear or fitting remorse without manifesting or feeling any of the bodily episodes and sensations associated with these emotions. At the very least, this would be odd. But I think we can go further. Where fear or remorse are fitting, distress—with its mental and physical components, such as accelerated heartrate—is fitting as well. To feel fitting fear of the bear without feeling distress is to be vulnerable to rational criticism; to feel fitting remorse about one’s crime without feeling distress is to be vulnerable to rational criticism.

In response, Smith might argue that, due to the strong causal connection between fear and remorse, on the one hand, and distress, on the other, it is hard to believe or even to imagine that one experiences fear or remorse without experiencing distress. The absence of distress is therefore not rationally criticizable itself but is a strong indicator of the rationally criticizable absence of a rationally evaluable attitude. But, again, we must ask whence the insistence that the relation between distress and our evaluative judgment is merely causal? Whether distress is a component of fitting emotions or a distinct phenomenon (a point which I will come back to in section 5), our evaluative practices indicate that we sometimes view it as fitting in the same way and for the same reasons we view the relevant emotions as fitting.<sup>8</sup> Thus, judging that I’ve done you wrong, it is not enough that I apologize and change my ways, I should also regret the wrong and, in regretting, be distressed by it.

In another appeal to our evaluative practices, Smith claims that it makes sense to ask a person to defend or justify “her shame, jealousy, fear, or admiration” but it does not make sense to ask her to defend or justify her nausea (258). But consider the kind of nausea a guilt-ridden person might feel. In justifying her guilt, the person would explain what she had done and why it was wrong to do so. Such explanation would be sufficient to justify her guilt given that guilt is a fitting reaction to the fact that she committed the wrong in question. She need not, in defending her guilt, also argue that guilt is a fitting response to the fact that she committed a wrong. It is easy to see this in the case of belief. In defending her belief that *p*, a person need not argue that belief is a fitting response to the fact that *p* is true; she needs only to defend her judgment that *p* is true. Similarly, in defending her nausea in response to the wrong she committed, a person need not defend the claim that her nausea is fitting in response to the wrong. Rather, she is expected to offer the same reasoning she would offer in defense of her guilt. The fact that she committed a horrible wrong—e.g., that she had ruined someone’s life—is the reason for her guilt as well as her nausea.

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<sup>8</sup> Corns (2019) argues in detail for a similar claim. Specifically, that the pleasantness or unpleasantness associated with a wide range of mental phenomena is rationally evaluable. She calls this “hedonic rationality”.

To be sure, a person might be mistaken about whether her sensations and bodily episodes are rationally evaluable. For example, a person might suffer from headaches and nausea and seek medical assistance only to realize, perhaps during therapy, that the symptoms she has been suffering from are rationally evaluable conditions associated with the guilt she's been carrying since adolescence. In making this connection, she would not only learn something about the cause of her symptoms; she would discover a reason-for-which explanation for those symptoms. Recognizing that these symptoms are really *about* the supposedly awful thing she once did allows her to view her symptoms as expressions of her own evaluative point of view. She might say: "I never *thought* I did anything wrong and yet I now see that all these years I've been haunted by guilt and what I took to be an illness was in fact a reflection of my judgment." This recognition might then allow her to evaluate the rationality and justification of these emotions, sensations, and feelings.

In light of the above, I think it is difficult to make a case on the basis of observation alone that, as the common view holds, our evaluative practices treat all bodily episodes and sensations as non-rational. However, there are theoretical assumptions that seem to provide strong reason to accept that sensations and bodily episodes must be non-rational. These assumptions might also explain why philosophers have generally interpreted our evaluative practices as drawing a clear line between attitudes, on the one hand, and sensations, feelings, and bodily episodes, on the other.

#### **4. Against rationally evaluable heartbeats: rationally-evaluable items must be fit-evaluable**

The idea that sensations, feelings, and bodily episodes can be rationally evaluable might seem implausible to anyone who assumes that such items lack intentionality and that intentionality is a necessary condition for rational evaluability. Thus, Smith writes:

... [P]art of the reason that it would make no sense to demand justification in the case of sensations and other nonintentional mental states is precisely because they are not directed upon an object or state of affairs, and hence the idea of "getting it wrong" or "being justified" in the experiencing of the state does not really have application. Directedness upon an object, or intentionality, then, seems to be a necessary condition of direct responsibility in the sense I am trying to capture. (Smith 2005, 258)

Plausibly, for an item to be rationally evaluable it must have intentionality—it must be *about* something. Your fear is about the danger the bear poses and can therefore be rationally evaluable; since your racing heart is not about anything it cannot be rationally evaluable. I believe this thought underlies much of the discussion of rationally evaluable attitudes and I wish to consider it more carefully.

To begin, if intentionality is indeed a necessary feature of rationally evaluable items, then what is distinctive of rationally evaluable items is not that we can demand and provide reasons for them, but that they are fit-evaluable. Let me explain. Fit-related reasons are reasons that count in favor of an item being fitting to its object: fit-related reasons for belief that  $p$  count in favor of  $p$  being credible, fit-related reasons for intention to  $\phi$  count in favor of an  $\phi$ -ing being worth doing. Therefore, fit-related reasons presuppose that the item they support or oppose has intentionality: the item is about something with respect to which it can succeed or fail to be fitting.

Many believe we can have fit-unrelated reasons (or ‘wrong-kind-reasons’) for fit-evaluable attitudes such as belief, intention, amusement, shame, regret, etc.<sup>9</sup> These fit-unrelated reasons do not bear on the fittingness of an attitude but on the value of having it. If believing that I will do well in the exam improves my chances of doing well, then I have a reason to believe so; the value of having the belief explains my fit-unrelated reason. If intending to drink poison will win me a great sum of money, then I have reason to intend so; the value of intending to drink the poison explains my fit-unrelated reason.

Now note that it can also be valuable to digest, to experience a pleasant sensation on one’s skin, or to have fever in response to infection, although such states are not fit-evaluable. But if we can have reasons to be in valuable conditions independently of fit, it would seem that we can have reasons to be in valuable conditions that are not fit-evaluable. So alongside fit-unrelated (value-based) reasons to have fit-evaluable items (e.g., belief), we can have fit-unrelated (value-based) reasons to have items that are *not* fit-evaluable (e.g., fever). To block this implication, we would need an explanation of why the arguments that support fit-unrelated reasons for fit-evaluable items do not work in the case of items that are not fit-evaluable.

If, as Smith and many others believe, rationally evaluable items are necessarily evaluable as *justified with respect to their objects*, then rationally evaluable items are necessarily fit-evaluable, because for an item to be fit-evaluable is for it to be evaluable as justified with respect to what it is about. It follows that the fact that an item is such that we can demand or offer reasons for it does not determine whether the item is rationally evaluable or non-rational. Since we can have fit-unrelated reasons for items that lack intentionality, we can have reasons for non-rational items. Therefore, what is crucial for rationally evaluable items is not that we can demand and offer reasons for them, but that they are fit-evaluable.

To be sure, there are those who are wrong-kind-reasons skeptics: they deny that there are normative fit-unrelated reasons.<sup>10</sup> For them, all reasons are fit-related reasons, so there is no problem in appealing to reasons in order to distinguish rationally evaluable items. I do not wish to take a stand on whether there are fit-unrelated reasons. For my purposes, it is only important to remember that rationally evaluable items are necessarily fit-evaluable and therefore responsive to fit-related reasons, whether fit-related reasons exhaust the space of reasons or not.

Smith’s objection to the apparent rational evaluability of sensations and bodily episodes might be reconstructed in light of the above point. Consider **the argument from fit-evaluability**:

1. Rationally evaluable items are necessarily fit-evaluable, otherwise they are non-rational.
2. For an item to be fit-evaluable it must have intentionality, i.e., it must be directed to, or be about an object or state of affairs.
3. But “sensations and other nonintentional mental states” lack intentionality, they are not directed to and are not about anything.

Conclusion: Sensations and other nonintentional mental states are non-rational.

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<sup>9</sup> Examples of defenders of fit-unrelated reasons: D’Arms and Jacobson 2000; Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004; Danielsson and Olson 2007; Rosen 2015; Howard 2016, 2019; Leary 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Examples of skeptics about fit-unrelated reasons: Hieronymi 2005; Parfit 2011; Skorupski 2010; Way 2012.

I do not take issue with (1) and (2).<sup>11</sup> My issue is with (3). Smith's argument targets sensations—which she takes to be nonintentional—and nonintentional mental states. Insofar as she is only concerned with nonintentional phenomena, I have no disagreement with the argument. But the question is whether all bodily episodes and sensations are nonintentional and whether the mental states she considers to be nonintentional are in fact so.

Smith believes that the nausea she feels before having to speak in public and the butterflies she feels in her stomach before boarding a roller-coaster are nonintentional—that is, they are not about anything, they lack representational content. In particular, her nausea is unlike her fear and hope, which are directed toward the danger that the public performance poses and the promise it holds. Fear and hope are therefore fit-evaluable while nausea and butterflies in one's stomach are not. But why does Smith assume this? Why does she take for granted that her nausea is not about the objects of her fear and hope?

One possible thought is that nausea is often non-rational; it often occurs without being about anything at all. It might therefore seem that nausea is not the kind of state that has intentionality. Similarly, since headaches can occur without being about anything, one might conclude that headaches that are associated with grief do not share the intentionality of grief. And, finally, since your heartrate can accelerate merely due to the fact that you were running to catch the bus, your accelerated heartrate during fear might seem to lack fear's intentionality.

The underlying assumption is that if a given item has intentionality, it must have it due to the type of item it is. Belief and intention are *essentially* intentional, they are types of attitudes that have representational content. Since nausea (like headaches and racing hearts) can lack intentionality, it is not the type of item that has intentionality, so any instance of nausea must also lack intentionality.

The idea that intentionality is determined by the type of mental or physical phenomenon under consideration leads to the following inference:

**Intentionality by type**

If there are tokens of phenomenon of type  $m$  that lack intentionality, then there are no tokens of  $m$  that have intentionality.

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<sup>11</sup> Döring 2008 argues for (2). She writes:

Let us be clear that to be capable of playing a rationalizing role and of entering rational conflicts, both sense perceptions and emotions must have an intentional content of a certain kind. They must be about the world and represent it as being a certain way so as to be assessable for correctness, i.e., for adequacy to the actual state of the world that they purport to represent. (Döring 2008, 3, cited in Corns 2019)

In defending the claim that hedonic tone (i.e., pleasantness or unpleasantness) is rationally evaluable, Corns argues that either hedonic tone is reducible to something representational or some rationally evaluable mental phenomena are non-representational (Corns 2019, 244–245). The latter disjunct is a rejection of (2) above. The suggestion I go on to make is along the lines of Corns's former disjunct, but there is a crucial difference. I do not think that the intentionality of a mental or physical phenomenon must be explained by the kind of phenomenon it is or by the kind of phenomena it is reducible to.

I propose that our evaluative practices give us at least prima facie reason to doubt **intentionality by type** and the assumptions that underlie it. One and the same type of item can be fit-evaluable on one occasion but not on another, where in the first instance it has intentionality and in the second it does not. In the next section I propose a possible explanation for this phenomenon.

## 5. Fit, intentionality, and narrative

I have argued that rationally evaluable items are fit-evaluable and that to be fit-evaluable they must have intentionality. I have also argued that we treat sensations and bodily episodes as sometimes fit-evaluable, sometimes not. The question I wish to consider in this section is how can the same type of sensation or bodily episode be fit-evaluable (and therefore have intentionality) on one occasion and not fit-evaluable (because lacking intentionality) on another? My aim is to find a theory that can answer this question. The theory I will adopt and elaborate on cannot be fully worked out within the confines of this paper and the task of defending it will also have to wait for another occasion. However, the fact that our evaluative practices suggest it is a reason in its favor.

Let us return to the examples of heartrates. What might explain the fact that your accelerated heartrate after running to catch the bus is not fit-evaluable but the same heartrate while facing the bear is? And how can the same heartrate be about nothing at all in one case and about the danger you are facing in the other? The clue to answering these questions should be clear by now: when you are facing the bear your heartrate is associated with your fear and both seem to share the same intentional object. It is implausible that both your heartrate and your fear just happen to be about the same object; it is more likely that they have the same object because they are systematically related to a single determinant of intentionality. A theory that answers our question would (1) describe a single element that determines, at once, the object of your heartrate *and* the object of your fear in the bear encounter case, and (2) claim that this determinant is lacking in the running-for-the-bus case.

A natural view of the systematic relation between accelerated heartrate and fear is that the former is an element of the latter. Consider, for example, Peter Goldie's description of the complexity of emotions:

An emotion is complex in that it will typically involve many different elements: it involves episodes of emotional experience, including perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of various kinds, and bodily changes of various kinds; and it involves dispositions, including dispositions to experience further emotional episodes, to have further thoughts and feelings, and to behave in certain ways. (Goldie 2000, 12-13)

To be sure, Goldie is here describing a richer and more enduring phenomenon than a short-lived emotional episode, such as fear of a bear. However, as Darwin's depiction of fear makes clear, short lived emotional episodes are often quite complex and involve various bodily occurrences and sensations. Thus, whether as a short-lived reaction or as a more enduring state that involves patterns of sensations, imaginings, thoughts, and motivations, fear is a complex phenomenon that, arguably, includes a person's accelerated heartrate as one element.

This does not yet answer the question of intentionality and fit-evaluability. While many theorists of emotion allow that emotions are complex, most deny that all the ingredients of an emotion share its intentional object. Rather, many assume that emotions must have some essential ingredient that

is itself intentional and thus explains the intentionality and fit-evaluability of the emotion. To name two leading families of view, judgmental theories of emotions assimilate emotions to evaluative or normative beliefs or judgments,<sup>12</sup> while perceptual theories construe emotions as perceptual experiences of evaluative properties.<sup>13</sup> On these views, the bodily episodes that are elements of fear lack intentionality, but fear has intentionality because it is, at its core, a judgment or a perceptual experience of danger. These prominent views would deny that an accelerated heartrate is fit-evaluable when it is a component of fear.

Other views, however, take a more holistic approach. Deonna and Teroni, for example, argue that we should “move away from the curiously atomistic approach to bodily sensations implicit in many accounts of their role in emotions and recognize that, in emotions, these sensations are typically aspects of a whole pattern that constitutes a world-directed attitude” (Deonna and Teroni 2012, 79). Deonna and Teroni elucidate the relevant patterns of bodily sensations in terms of action-readiness. Thus, “fear of the dog is an experience of the dog as dangerous, precisely because it consists in feeling the body’s readiness to act so as to diminish the dog’s likely impact on it (flight, preemptive attack, etc.), and this felt attitude is correct if and only if the dog is dangerous” (81). On this view, one’s racing heart is fit-evaluable when it is part of fear’s pattern of action-readiness.

Deonna and Teroni’s view is compatible with a view of emotions that appeals to narrative (83). According to Goldie, the different elements of a given emotion are structured as a recognizable emotion-type by a narrative in which they are embedded (Goldie 2000, 13.) This suggestion follows Ronald de Sousa’s idea that narratives, and specifically “paradigm scenarios”, define the character of our emotions:

We are made familiar with the vocabulary of emotion by association with *paradigm scenarios*. These are drawn first from our daily life as small children and later reinforced by the stories, art, and culture to which we are exposed. Later still, in literate cultures, they are supplemented and refined by literature. Paradigm scenarios involve two aspects: first, a situation type providing the characteristic *objects* of the specific emotion-type ... and second, a set of characteristic or “normal” *responses* to the situation, where normality is first a biological matter and then very quickly becomes a cultural one. (de Sousa 1987, 182, emphasis in original)

According to de Sousa, paradigm scenarios determine the intentionality of emotion and the associated action-readiness. Thus, emotion types are patterns that involve bodily episodes, affects, sensations, thoughts, and motivations, and are determined by paradigm scenarios or narratives. We draw on these familiar narratives to interpret situations we face and how we interpret these situations explains our emotional reactions to them.

Drawing on this picture, my proposal is that emotion-patterns inherit their fittingness from the fittingness of the narratives in which they are embedded. To unpack this idea, I will first explain what I take fitting narratives to be and then explain how they determine the fittingness of emotions.

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<sup>12</sup> For example: Solomon 1976; Greenspan 1988; Nussbaum 2001.

<sup>13</sup> For example: Johnston 2001; Döring 2007; Tye 2008; Tappolet 2016.

Very roughly, and without getting into various controversies about the nature of narrative, we can characterize narrative as a representation of series of events and of the people involved in them, delivered from a certain perspective or perspectives. Moreover, narratives attribute to the events they depict a certain coherence and meaning, as well as evaluative and emotional import.<sup>14</sup> Employing this brief characterization, we can identify ways in which narratives can succeed or fail to be fitting.

To begin, note that narratives are *representations* of sequences or processes. In general, the events and things depicted in a narrative are not themselves a narrative, unless the narrative is *of* a narrative—e.g., the story of how *Don Quixote* was conceived and written. So a life-narrative is a narrative *of* a life, not a life that *is* a narrative; a self-narrative is a narrative *of* a self not a self that *is* a narrative (Goldie 2012, 153–154).

Since narratives are representations they might also *misrepresent*. Narratives can misrepresent in various ways: they might distort facts and causal connections, fail to note relevant information, etc. I will call such misrepresentations *factual misrepresentations*. The first way in which narratives can fail to be fitting is by including factual misrepresentations.

There is, however, an important caveat with regard to factual misrepresentation in narrative. Some narratives do not purport (and are not expected) to faithfully represent things as they are, e.g., fictional narratives. The representation of facts in such narratives is not true, but it is not a *misrepresentation* either. Therefore, fictional narratives cannot fail to be fitting due to factual misrepresentation.

Another way in which narratives can misrepresent concerns the reactions they elicits. Narratives are typically engaging—they engage the emotions and evaluative judgments of the audience. Thus, a narrative can misrepresent by eliciting or calling upon emotional and judgmental reactions that are not fitting to the events it depicts. For example, a narrative can falsely present an action as shameful, thereby eliciting the unfitting judgment that it is shameful, or it might falsely present an action as contemptible, thereby eliciting unfitting contempt for it. I will call such misrepresentations: *emotional and evaluative misrepresentations*. This second way in which narratives can fail to be fitting is by including emotional and evaluative misrepresentations.

Emotional and evaluative misrepresentations are possible even in fictional narratives, which do not purport to depict the truth. For example, a fictional narrative about a serial killer might elicit an unfitting reaction to the violence it depicts if it elicits, e.g., admiration for the killer. Of course, whether such reaction is indeed unfitting is debatable, but the fact it might be unfitting is sufficient to show that fictional narratives can, in principle, misrepresent in this way.

A narrative that includes no factual, emotional, or evaluative misrepresentations is a *completely fitting narrative*.<sup>15</sup> Narratives can be more or less fitting given the degree of accuracy and the quality of their representation.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This characterization of narrative draws on Goldie 2012, chapter 1.

<sup>15</sup> As noted above, a fictional narrative does not include any factual misrepresentations because it does not purport to depict facts at all. So a fictional narrative can be perfectly fitting.

<sup>16</sup> Although I acknowledge that whether fittingness is gradable is a controversial issue. See Berker in this volume.

Drawing on the narrative view of emotion described above, I propose that bodily episodes and sensations can have intentional objects and be fit-evaluable when and because they are explained as such by the agent's fit-evaluable narrative—that is, by the agent's fit-evaluable narrative representation of the situation. This dense formulation contains three explanatory connections. First, the fact that the agent represents the situation by a fit-evaluable narrative explains the occurrence of the agent's bodily episodes and sensations. Second, these bodily episodes and sensations have intentionality and are fit-evaluable because the narrative that explains their occurrence portrays them as having intentionality and being fit-evaluable. Finally, the fittingness of the agent's narrative explains the fittingness of the agent's bodily episodes and sensations.<sup>17</sup>

Suppose you take a pill that makes your heart accelerate and then you encounter a bear. As you face the bear your heart races but this bodily episode is independent of your understanding of the situation. In such a case, your accelerated heartrate is non-rational even if you actually fear the bear. This is explained by the fact that your racing heart is not explained by your narrative representation of the situation. In the original bear encounter case, all that is mentioned is that you encounter a bear and that your heartrate accelerates, so we assume that your heart races because of how you represent your situation to yourself—that is, as having a certain meaning and significance, relating your recent past (setting up camp in the forest) to the present moment (facing the enormous bear) and your immediate future (dying or surviving the bear encounter). The narrative understanding we attribute to you leads us to think that your heartrate is fit-evaluable.

To illustrate the role of fit according to my proposal, let me introduce another example. Stuck in traffic on my way home from work, I scratch my chin. A fellow driver mistakes my hand movement for an insult and responds with anger. I cannot hear him but I see his facial expressions and hand movements through the windshield. If I didn't know better, I might think he is having some kind of seizure. However, given my understanding of the story he must be telling himself, his frantic movements strike me as elements of anger. Thus, the fact that he represents the situation as he does explains his sensations and bodily episodes as elements of anger. Moreover, his bodily episodes and sensations have intentionality and are fit-evaluable because they are explained as such by his fit-evaluable narrative, according to which I intentionally insulted him. However, his fit-evaluable narrative is not fitting: it misrepresents my intention and the evaluative significance of my hand movement. Since his narrative is not fitting, the anger explained by his narrative is not fitting either. There is, however, also the possibility that I am mistaken in my interpretation of the situation. Maybe the driver is not angry at all but is, in fact, having a seizure. In this case, the driver's bodily episodes are non-rational because they are *not* explained by his fit-evaluable narrative representation of the situation.

I conclude by briefly considering an objection. I have proposed that narrative representation explains emotional reactions and that fitting narrative representation explains fitting emotional reactions. According to David Velleman's view of narrative understanding, I am getting things backwards: our narratives are *explained by* our emotional reactions. Velleman argues that narratives exploit familiar emotional patterns or "cadences" to make us feel a certain way about the events they depict. Narrative understanding, according to him, is the sense of recognition that

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<sup>17</sup> My proposal is in line with Neta's (2018): "A series of events or states in the agent can amount to the agent's being committed to something only by virtue of the agent's representing those very same events or states as appropriately responsive to, or expressive of, that commitment" (298).



we have when we connect the events in the narrative to a familiar emotional cadence. So narrative understanding is really just the way a narrative makes us feel about the events it depicts.

A story therefore enables its audience to assimilate events, not to familiar patterns of *how things happen*, but rather to familiar patterns of *how things feel*. These patterns are not themselves stored in discursive form, as scenarios or stories: they are stored rather in experiential, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic memory—as we might say, in the muscle-memory of the heart .. Thus, the audience of a story understands the narrated events, first, because it knows how they feel, in the sense that it experiences them as leading it through a natural emotional sequence; and second, because it knows how it feels about them, in the sense that it arrives at a stable attitude toward them overall. (Velleman 2003, 19)

If this is right then narratives do not help us understand what is fitting to feel about the events they depict; they simply *make* us feel a certain way. Our emotional reactions are merely caused, not informed by the narrative, and they are therefore not fit-evaluable.

However, as Gregory Currie notes, this result seems implausible.

Suppose someone found emotional resolution in the deduction, according to physical laws, of a certain pattern of particle interaction. No doubt this would be unusual but such a deduction, or the representation of it, would not come to be a narrative if, for some reason, all or most of us started finding such emotional satisfactions in particle physics. (Currie 2010, 30)

That we can experience unfitting emotional resolution suggests that narratives do not merely cause emotional resolution but portray such resolution as fitting in response to the events they depict. Indeed, Velleman himself seems to sense this when he writes: “Insofar as historical discourse conveys understanding by organizing the past into stories, what it conveys is not an objective understanding of how historical events came about but a subjective understanding of *how to feel about them*” (Velleman 2003, 20, my emphasis). It is one thing to say that historical discourse makes us feel a certain way about historical events and quite another to say it conveys to us how we *should* feel about them. The latter proposal is compatible with the view I have put forward.

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