Michael S. Brady. *Emotional Insight: The Epistemic Role of Emotional Experience*. Oxford University Press 2014. 216 pp. $51.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199685523); $35.00 USD (Paperback ISBN 9780198776888).

As its title indicates, Brady assumes that emotions are specifically *informative*, they point to something relevant, more accurate than themselves; they are epistemically linked. It is 'a platitude, says Brady, that emotions constitute reactions to objects, events, and state of affairs that are potentially significant or important to us' (10). The first clue is the behavioural response: '[t]he ideas that emotions are reactions…suggests that emotions involve or motivate a *behavioural response* to such things' (11). Hence, emotions imply that we *do* something about them. According to Bradley, 'the idea that emotions involve or motivate a behavioural response to important objects and events is a useful starting point for an investigation into the epistemic value of emotions' (12). One of the epistemic benefit of emotion would be 'attention': 'For it is a commonplace that emotion and attention are closely linked. When I'm in love I'm focused on, attentive to, my beloved, at the expense of other possible objects of attention. When I'm curious my attention is locked into the question of puzzle…'. Not surprisingly, if emotion is akin to attention, that is, if emotion is directed toward the object, rather than the first recipient of the affect, then emotion has an intentional flavour: 'emotion has epistemic value in virtue of directing our attention, quickly and efficiently, to objects and events that are of potential significance…emotions are *intentional* mental states or phenomena' (25-6). One should admit that loading emotion with intentionality is not a piece of cake, but the way Brady chooses to continue allows him to propose a 'dual representation role' for emotions: 'emotions can represent the objects and events that constitute their targets, such as pay rises and behaviour at parties, and emotions can represent *that* such things have certain evaluative properties or features, like the properties of being insulting or being shameful. The first representation has non-evaluative content, we might say, whilst the second has evaluative content' (27). It is not clear at all whether there is such a division of labour between emotions *as* evaluative or non-evaluative; but more surprising is the intervention, in the discourse, of the concept of 'representation'. From the beginning, there is a certain kind of drifting that Brady imposes on the concept of emotion, rather, on *emotions*, and once that we have reached the point of claiming that emotions *represent* 'targets' or 'values,' we can estimate the latitude of the drift: it is far. Does it need to drift this far in order to assume such statements as 'I believe that I am in danger *because* or as a *result of* being afraid; I believe that he is untrustworthy as a result of feeling mistrust in his presence…'? We can reasonably doubt it.

If we accept what Brady is claiming, emotions are essentially intentional and representational; that is, emotions are directed toward something, and they represent this or that 'value' (such as *anger*, *shame*, and so forth). Emotions are conscious mental phenomena, directed or aimed at something. But it is difficult to consider emotions as intentional. The very nature of intentionality is its voluntary characteristic: my consciousness focuses on this object because I am consciously focusing on it. But I do not voluntarily decide to be moved or touched by something; since, by definition, emotions are unexpected. In the second case, emotions represent something as being *x*; but in order to be representational, emotions should be systemic, as it is now clear that the use of the word 'representation,' following Dretske, (*Naturalizing the Mind*, MIT, 1995) implies a systemic machinery, which posits that there exists a certain relation (which Dretske calls the 'relation C') between a representational system and some external data. On this account, emotions are systematically driven, and under such and such circumstance, this output will cause that emotion. But we know that it is not the case. Emotions are not public phenomena; that is, we

cannot predict our emotional reaction; as Brady recognizes 'emotional experience, like sensory perceptual experience, is something that happens to us automatically, rather than something that we voluntarily do' (47).

In chapter 2, 'The Perceptual Model,' Brady says that the 'intentional element in emotion is a matter of *perception'* (45), because 'emotions and perception are similar'. Brady agrees with Prinz concerning the definition of perception: 'perceptual experiences are conscious mental states that result from the operation of a perceptual system or modality. We might then hold, following Jesse Prinz, that a perceptual system or modality is a 'dedicated input system,' and define this as 'a mental system that has the function of receiving information from the body or the world via some priority class of transducers and internal representations' (53). If Brady uses Prinz's definition it is because, according to the latter, 'emotions must reside in such systems'. The idea that emotion is a percept is linked to the James-Lange theory which asserts that emotions are the feeling of bodily changes. This, asserts Prinz, it is 'clearly a perceptual theory' (Brady, 55). But what, exactly, does James say about emotions? His 1899 *Principles of Psychology* (William James, Dover, 1950) reads thus:

> 'Our natural way of thinking about these coarse emotions is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of the mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My theory, on the contrary, is that the *bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur* IS *the emotion*'.

If we follow James, can we say that emotions are linked to some kind of perception? If emotions are the direct feeling of the bodily changes, we cannot say that they are perceptions. There is an 'exciting fact' which is perceived by the body, which leads to the 'bodily changes,' and there is a 'feeling' of these changes, and this feeling is what James calls 'emotion'. Now, emotions are not perceptions *per se*; they are feelings. So when Prinz says that the James' theory of feeling is linked to the 'perceptual theory,' he is being misleading; and so too Brady. Emotions are feelings, not perceptions. So much for the 'perceptual model' according to James.

'The central claim of the perceptual model is an epistemological claim, namely, that emotional experience constitutes reason or evidence for evaluative judgement in a similar way to the way in which perceptual experience constitutes reason or evidence for empirical judgement' (63). It is very difficult to see the pertinence of this statement, which assumes that emotions are perceptive as well as evaluative. Why put value in perception? What is the value of perceiving a bird flying? Seeing the bus approaching while I am late to catch it can make me accelerate my pace; but what is the *value* of this perception? The value, if any, can only be of a *normative* kind. But now, imagine that I say to the driver that this very bus is ugly, and that its ugliness should be a universal claim on which everyone should agree. What should his answer be? Let us imagine that the bus driver studied philosophy (a coherent hypothesis). He could answer that, according to Kant (1790, Appendix §60), 'there neither is nor can be a science of the Beautiful, and the judgement of taste is not determinable by means of principles'. If there would be such a science, or principles, then we could teach or learn *how* to produce the 'beautiful'; and yet, such a science does not exist.

Still, Brady relies not on James, but on Prinz, because the latter maintains a perceptual theory of emotions, as some others do. For instance, Brady mentions Johnston, for whom '"without affective" engagement" with the world we would be blind to or ignorant of the relevant values.

The thought is that the world appears to us affectively in a certain way in emotional experience…' (56). The emotional engagement with the world would be, accordingly, value-laden: 'if one has never been moved or *affected* by the determinate ways in which things are beautiful or charming or erotic or banal or sublime or appealing, then one is ignorant of the relevant determinate values' (Johnston quoted by Brady 57).

In chapter 3, Brady takes the opposite stance to chapter 2: 'there are significant differences between emotions and perceptual experiences' (83). He gives examples, not all conclusive, for finally stating that 'we do not take our emotional experience at face value, or think that our emotional experience discharges our justificatory burden with respect to our evaluative judgements and beliefs; and we are right to regard emotional experience in this negative way' (89). In other words, Brady admits that emotions cannot be normative; it is not because I am afraid of a bull that everybody should be afraid of bulls.

In chapter 4, Brady argues that emotion can be evaluative enough. For instance, there would be some '*ineffable* values,' like the 'pleasure' provoked by a 'sunset,' a 'beer,' a 'kiss'. Enjoying such things, according to Brady, is *real*. There are real emotions which can assure us that we are right; right to appreciate them, and because they are right, they fit the right kind of emotion-type that we are supposed to *feel* at this very moment. From here, he dubs emotions as '*proxies* for genuine reasons' (130), since, for instance we are emotionally right when we fear the road when it is icy and foggy (130). '…[w]hen we believe on the basis of emotional experience, we are believing on the basis of *pro tempore* reasons, reasons for "the time being", which we rely upon precisely because we presently lack awareness of features that constitute genuine reasons for our judgements. For note that if we *did* become aware of such features, then the justificatory force of our emotional experience would seem to disappear' (130). Now Brady assumes that to consider an emotion as 'an *additional* reason for the evaluative judgement would seem to be to engage in an illicit form of double-counting' (131); one on the account of evaluation, and one on the account of emotion. Probably, being in emotional states is different from evaluating; and for at least one reason: they take different tracks. Emotions take the psychic-life-track, whereas perception takes the brain-life-track. We could have life without emotions, but we never could have life without perception. Emotions are definitely linked to our psychic life; they depend on the moment, as a background, on the history of our psychic life. It cannot be the case that, for any situation, I will *feel* such and such every time this very situation occurs. If that were the case, then emotions would be predictable, and I could foresee and anticipate every emotion; but it is not the case, it does not work like this. Consequently, emotions have no epistemic value, if 'epistemic' means a reliable and durable knowledge. Although there are cases in which particular situations will lead to some **reiterable** and typical emotional reaction, and we can think about *neurosis*. But, on the other hand, the typical and reiterable emotional reactions cannot be predictable.

In Chapter 5, Brady encompasses diverse approaches on emotion; for instance the 'persistence of attention in emotional experience' (163), 'wide' or 'narrow' 'emotional focus' (164), or the Goldie hypothesis that emotions are governed by 'virtuous habits of thought and attention' (170). According to Brady, Goldie does not succeed in showing that emotions are governed by virtuous habits, because "Goldie's picture of a subject who unreflectively trusts her emotional responses, because her attention is not explicitly drawn to their operation in the relevant circumstances, is in fact a picture of someone who *fails* to be virtuous' (175). The virtuous person, says Brady, is the one who 'understands' emotions by 'controlling' them: 'understanding facilitates control of attention in emotional experience, and the virtuous control of attention in emotional

experience facilitates evaluative understanding […] the virtuous person who possesses evaluative understanding is a person who grasps both the evaluative structure of her situation and *discounts* the deliverances of her emotional responses, since to take such deliverances into account would be to engage in an illicit form of double-counting' (175-6). The category of 'virtuous person' is problematic. I do not exactly understand what it means. Why should the one who discounts his emotions be more virtuous than the one who does not? Why are emotions discarded from evaluation, as if evaluation could only mean 'certainty,' 'necessary truth'? The examples of emotions given by Brady are not convincing enough to substantiate his own view, even those he gives when he admits that, sometimes, the virtuous person cannot help relying on her 'emotional experiences' (187). But generally, he says, the virtuous person does not trust his emotional experiences; and why not? Because he 'has the right kind of sensibility and the right kind of education' (188). Now, we wonder what these 'right kinds' are? How do we know if we have them? What to do if we wish to acquire these 'right kinds'? And what does 'right' mean, after all?

There is something more psychological than philosophical in these pages. They look like a recipe: given such and such circumstances, the virtuous subject is bound to act like this and not like that. Brady puts high hopes in the regulation, i.e., the *automation* of emotions in our daily life. The evaluation of emotion is not always a piece of cake: once we are able to denominate our emotions, say, that we *feel* love, we *feel* shame, and so forth, we might not be 'in' emotion any more. After all, doesn't it seem legitimate to assume that emotion is undefinable? At the moment you feel something, at this very precise moment, you can feel an emotion; and it is not always easy to immediately understand *what* type this emotion belongs to. This is, I believe, what characterizes emotions: their indefinability. As soon as one can say 'I am sad,' he is already less sad than he was; in other words, once the emotions is conceptualized (I am *sad*, I feel *sad*, I am *happy*, I feel *happy*…) we have reached a higher level, since I believe that emotions, bare emotions, are unnamable. Sometimes I feel an emotion and I do not know what is it, and more, I do not know why I feel moved in this particular way. Emotions are projections from the thalamus; but some of them come from the unconscious, in the Freudian sense; and in such a way it is impossible to know 'why' such emotions arise.

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