

ALSTON'S DOXASTIC PRACTICE APPROACH AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF EMOTIONAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE¹

ABORDAGEM DA PRÁTICA DOXÁSTICA DE ALSTON E A EPISTEMOLOGIA DA EXPERIÊNCIA RELIGIOSA EMOCIONAL

VERONICA DE SOUSA MACIEL (*)



(*) **Veronica de Sousa Maciel**

Graduada em Filosofia pela Universidade de Brasília. Mestranda no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Filosofia da UnB. Pesquisa em Epistemologia das Emoções.

E-mail: veronicauz@gmail.com

Resumo: O objetivo deste artigo é investigar se as crenças baseadas em emoções religiosas são confiáveis em termos epistemológicos. Para alcançar isto, nos direcionaremos à abordagem da prática doxástica de William Alston, a qual examina a possibilidade de uma crença ser justificada por meio da confiabilidade de um mecanismo produtor de crença, as práticas doxásticas. O esforço a ser feito aqui é aplicar a abordagem de Alston a uma possível prática doxástica das emoções. Também inspirado pela tese de Rudolf Otto sobre a experiência religiosa ser não racional, investigaremos se esse não racional é emocional e até que ponto podemos justificar crenças religiosas formadas pela emoção.

Palavras-chave: Emoção; Experiência Religiosa; Prática Doxástica; Numinoso.

Abstract: The aim of this article is to inquire whether beliefs based on religious emotions are reliable in epistemological terms. In order to accomplish this, we will address William Alston's doxastic practice approach, which examines the possibility of a belief being justified through the reliability of a belief-forming mechanism, the doxastic practices. The attempt to be made here is to apply Alston's approach to a possible emotion doxastic practice. Also, inspired by Rudolf Otto's thesis about the non-rational in religious experience, we aim to inquire if that non-rational is emotional and to what extent we can justify religious beliefs formed by emotions.

Keywords: Emotion; Religious Experience; Doxastic Practice; Numinous.

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INTRODUCTION

The presence of God is felt by the heart. For Rudolf Otto, the feeling of numinous is the way we feel the divine. For Alston, the personal presence of God may be felt by perception and the belief formed this way can be justified. In this paper, we intend to interpret Otto's idea in terms of a religious emotion. In addition, after describing what is an emotion, we want to see to what extent emotions can be similar to perception. So, if perception shows itself reliable to yield beliefs, according to Alston's doxastic practices epistemology, maybe emotions can be one of these practices too.

1. THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF HOLY

A very influential work on religious experience is Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (1923). According to Rudolf Otto, the interpretation about Deity is in terms like supreme power, spirit, goodwill, selfhood, and these are understood as rational attributes, usually done in what he calls 'rational religions', like the theistic ones (OTTO, 1923, p. 1). Thus, the rational thought about religious experience is more credited than the emotional. This happens because of, in a certain way, the orthodox thought has a strong influence given its tradition in philosophy for the one-sided focus on the rationality of the idea of God. However, rational attributes may not be enough to talk about our experience of the divinity. To say something about the holy is to say further than the rational because the rational attributes are more appropriately thought of as limited to our thinking about divinity, which is certainly not the whole of our experience of it.

The traditional idea expects that the rational analysis may come after the emotional elements, i.e., that emotional element is a pre reflexive step forward to rational issues. This results in ignoring the emotional element of the matter. In other words, the emotional is rather like a primitive point of experience that develops to be rational.

Otto develops a term to talk about that something that happens within a religious experience, the *numinous*. The numinous is a category that cannot be defined but only discussed, as he says:

I shall speak then of a unique 'numinous' category of value and of a definitely 'numinous' state of mind, which is always found wherever the category is applied. This mental state is perfectly sui generis and irreducible to any other; and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined (OTTO, 1923, p. 7).

Present in religious experience is the creature-feeling, which is like the feeling that occurs when the subject sees herself in a way abased and overwhelmed in front of something supreme above all creatures. Similar to when Abraham said, 'I am dust and ashes'. To a better elucidation, Otto presents the feeling of dependence, based on Schleiermacher's idea put forward in *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1799). This dependence is not exactly like a 'natural' sense, as a sense of personal insufficiency and impotence and being determined by environment and circumstances, but it's an analogy instead (OTTO, 1923, p. 9). It is qualitatively different from the feeling of dependence in our usual experiences. Thus, he calls this experience 'creature-feeling', which cannot be conceptualized due to being ineffable and only can be recognized by whom experiences it.

Another element that defines the numinous is the *mysterium tremendum*. This is an irrational feature of the divine felt by the person who contacts it and cannot be explained by concept, but we can perceive it by the reaction in the subject's psyche. In his words, 'it may become the hushed, trembling, and speechless humility of the creature in presence of – whom or what? In presence of that which is a Mystery inexpressible and above all creatures' (OTTO, 1923, p. 13).

Within the *mysterium tremendum*, there are some elements. First, the element of awefulness. To explain some specific kind of emotional response, he uses by analogy the emotion of 'trembling', the fear itself, but in this context, it is distinct of being afraid. The religious dread or awe has its antecedent stage in the 'dread of ghosts', the starting point of religions (OTTO, 1923, p.15). The physical reaction of this dread is different from natural fear or terror, not only by degree or intensity but also qualitatively. It is the

shudder with mystery, which is available for those who are predisposed which works as he says:

It implies the first application of a category of valuation which has no place in the everyday natural world of ordinary experience and is only possible to a being in whom has been awakened a mental predisposition, unique in kind and different in a definite way from any natural faculty. (OTTO, 1923, p 15-16).

Its collateral effect is the creature-feeling.

An additional element felt in the numinous experience is the overpoweringness, *majestas*. The feeling of majesty refers to that the person seeing itself staring at. At this moment, it is accompanied by the feeling of being nothing, the creature-feeling. The person feels herself to be nothing in front of someone or something which is all. This feeling brings to a sense of annihilation of the self, as the creature in front of the numinous. The mystique of *majestas* is the experience of the only God, as in the feeling of Abraham.

The third one is the energy of numinous, which can be felt in wrath and expressed in ‘vitality, passion, emotional temper, will, force, movement, excitement, activity, impetus’ (OTTO, 1923, p. 23), it asserts the aspect of a “living God”, according to Otto. When active its presence causes tension and dynamism. These characteristics may lead to challenge the philosophical concept of God and think about the irrationality of religion. As Otto mentions, these characteristics are criticized by philosophers as anthropomorphism, but he says that they are wrong because these are the ‘genuine aspect of the divine nature – its non-rational aspect’ (OTTO, 1923, p. 24).

Another side of the numinous is the *fascinans*, the fascinating and captivating by contrast and, at the same time, in harmony with the *tremendum*. The daemonic-divine has its aspects of horror and dread, but in the same way, has the facets of attractiveness and charming. The mystery is wonderful and prodigious. While the feelings of love, mercy, compassion, charity are natural mental states but arranged in a rational way, these contrast with irrational elements (OTTO, 1923, p. 31-32). Shown in rapture of hymns of salvation and glorification, it surpasses the religious moments, it is also lived in the solemnity of meditation and individual devotion to holy, which fulfills the soul in an ineffable way. Otto argues that only religion can trigger this kind of reaction and it is non-rational,

because 'the mind knows of in yearning and presentiment, recognizing it for what it is behind the obscure and inadequate symbols which are its only expression' (OTTO, 1923, p. 36).

According to that description, the non-rational in religious experience cannot be conceptualized, furthermore, we only can communicate through emotional analogies. As in this narrative:

There is something I have long wanted to ask you. You are learned. When you are alone in the veld like this, and the sun shines so on the bushes, does it ever seem to you that something speaks? It is not anything you hear with the ear, but it is as though you grew so small, so *small*, and the other so great. Then the little things at the house seem all nothing. (SCHREINER, 2021, p. 291).

At the first sight, it seems a natural emotion, however, it has a greater intensity than the usual. And being so strong, maybe it comes from a stronger object. But, most importantly, the person feels not a mere human feeling, but something yielded by something (or somebody) other than human. However, it is not a mere feeling, but can it be an emotion? In order to answer to this question, we need to understand the concept of emotion.

2. THE CONCEPT OF EMOTION

The philosophical approach to emotions differs depending on the way we understand the emotional phenomenon. The issue is basically whether emotion is a bodily response to psychological changes, like in the somatic theory, or whether it occurs mainly in the mind, like in cognitive theory. There is another point of view according to which emotion is the behavior that we can notice. Also, there is the hybrid notion, according to which emotion is something that happens in the mind and the body at the same time. We will assume this hybrid view, for the following reasons.

For Peter Goldie, emotion 'is typically complex, episodic, dynamic and structured' (GOLDIE, 2000, p. 12). Complex because it involves various elements, like perception, thought, feeling, and body changes (GOLDIE, 2000, p. 12). Episodic and dynamic because its elements 'can come and go, wax and wane' and depend on various

factors (GOLDIE, 2000, p. 13). It is also structured by elements that form emotions and the narrative² is the factor that maintains these together. So, since emotion is a compounded structure of elements, we need to know which elements are these.

The main component of the concept of emotion in the hybrid account is intentionality. Intentionality is given by the subject's mind and her body reactions towards an object. When we feel angry, the anger is for something or someone, the same is for love, sadness, delight, envy. Thus, the object needs to be identified by the person. Not always the object is real, sometimes it happens to be existent only in imagination. Further, intentionality is what distinguishes emotion from a state of mind, since the latter has a less specific object. Goldie calls 'feeling towards' this element of intentionality: 'Feeling towards is thinking of with feeling so that your emotional feelings are directed towards the object of your thought' (GOLDIE, 2000, p. 19). Thus, we don't have emotions about something we cannot think or something that doesn't exist anywhere. Consequently, imagination and perception, or both combined, play a role in making sense of emotion.

This is Goldie's answer for what he calls 'over-intellectualization' of emotions. To consider that intentionality is only beliefs and desires is to leave out the feelings and individual personal aspects. For understanding someone's emotion it is required to make sense of it to us. For this reason, beliefs, desires, humor, and character also fit to evaluate the meaning of emotion. For example, the desire into your envy emotion will be an indication of what type of envy you are feeling. There is envy as wishing to have the same thing as someone else has, but without the desire that this one loses this thing. Yet, in other moments, envy can be the wish that the other person loses what you desire.

Thus, it is also possible to evaluate the adequacy or appropriateness of emotions even while having it. Evaluation is important because it allows us to respond to an occurrence in either a specific or alternative manner. For example, consider seeing a bear and acknowledge the level of danger. While some emotions can be universal, there may be possible cultural variances in our response to certain occurrences. Likewise, if we can evaluate, we can educate our emotions to have appropriate responses.

²The context of experience, personal meaning, causes involved.

There is a second element to be listed in the defining features of emotions: the bodily feelings, that is, the awareness of the body's changes that happen with feeling³. However, it is possible to have an emotion without physical feelings, since sometimes someone does not notice the bodily changes, but still has feelings. For this reason, Goldie uses the notion of 'borrowed intentionality'. While we could think that there are two feelings in emotional experience, the feeling towards – directed at the object of the emotion – and the bodily feeling – directed at one's own body –, Goldie sees it differently. For him, our body and mind are engaged in the experience and all feelings are “united in consciousness” (GOLDIE, 2000, p. 55). It is unjustified to assume that feelings involved need to be one or another and cannot have both characteristics.

However, even if we acknowledge the dual feature of emotional experience, we still lack an understanding about the operation of that experience. For this, we resort to Aaron Ben-Ze'ev (2013), who assumes that emotion cannot be defined strictly but only categorized by familiarity. We can distinguish characters like instability, great intensity, partiality, and brief duration, which are usually present in emotional episodes. Emotion is unstable because it changes from a context to another that is not stabilized yet, but it means “intense, occasional, and limited agitation” (BEN-ZE'EV, 2013 p. 45). Agitation because if someone is stable, he is not living an emotional episode, he is indifferent and, consequently, not emotional. Emotion comes with heat and urgency into a great intensity, there is the mobilization of many resources because the mental system was not ready for change yet (BEN-ZE'EV, 2013, p. 45). And indicates interest in something that becomes very important. It is partial because it has a target (few people or objects) and expresses a personal and interested perspective, and the subject's values and preferences (BEN-ZE'EV, 2013, p. 45). This partiality explains why we cannot feel emotional towards everyone or all things at the same time, since emotion needs time and focused attention to something. It comes in brief states too, because the body and mental efforts have a limit to endure, it cannot bear the instability too long.

Intentionality is also referred to objects present in memory, perception, thoughts, dreams, imagination, desires, apart from emotion (BEN-ZE'EV, 2013, p. 47). This intentionality is divided into three components: cognition, evaluation, and motivation.

³ Consider for while the meaning of *feeling* as *sensation*, not as prolonged emotion.

The cognitive element is the information about circumstances, the evaluative is an evaluation about this information, the motivational component is the address of our desires, or readiness to act in these circumstances (BEN-ZE'EV, 2013, p. 47). These three components are combined with the feeling for an experience, not being separated states.

However, cognition can be distorted by partiality, proximity, and an intense feeling dimension (BEN-ZE'EV, 2013, p. 47). Partiality makes those who are involved to see only their point of view since having an emotion means to be personally involved. Proximity is to be very closely involved, since we cannot emotionally engage with a distant object, but this makes us not to be able to see the complete situation. This explains why people are bothered by situations in their neighborhood instead of in another country. The intense feeling affects our intellect; besides, it can increase our attention.

With the evaluative component of emotion, we can notice the importance of something to us. We can assess how something affects us, or how much we want, or not, something. What we have here is not a moral evaluation because we can consider something pleasant but morally wrong and vice versa (BEN-ZE'EV, 2013, p. 48).

The motivational component is about our readiness to act, what stimulates our action to face the circumstances. Together with the evaluative component, it offers the disposition to act appropriately, by means of analyzing the occasion we choose our future actions.

So, the basic components of emotions are cognition, evaluation, motivation, and feeling. And these have two basic mental dimensions: intentionality and feeling. The first set of features is about the relation of subject-object and the second one is about the individual's own state of mind.

I believe Ben-Ze'ev's notion is supplementary to Goldie's proposal. For the aim of this paper, it is interesting to think whether these aspects can be applied to Otto's thesis about the irrational element in religious experience. Emotion is an experience that occurs with body and mind, although sometimes only one or the other; there is an evaluative element in it, the subject may recognize its symptoms or occasion, but it does not occur *because of* evaluation. As a pre reflexive phenomenon, what activates an emotion is the object present in mind or perception, that is, it needs the presence of an object, and begins

in that presence causing an effect on someone. In addition, by coming before an evaluation, emotion has an aspect of being non-rational.

According to Philip C. Almond (1984, p. 83-82), the type of experience that Otto describes is that the subject receives the perception of a divine object. Thus, by the presence of the feeling, we can take on that the object is actually present. That will suit with how William Alston describes perception in mystical experience.

It is not hard to understand emotion as having something in common with perception. Adam Pelser (2014, p. 114) affirms that justification of emotion-formed beliefs is because “emotions are direct experiences (perceptions) of thick, particular values” and this is pertinent to the idea that emotions have an evaluation aspect.

In the following section we will deepen this understanding of emotion as a perception of a presence. So, emotion will be examined as functioning similar to perception, and, if so, we will inquire to which extent emotion can be epistemically evaluated as Alston evaluates perception in his doxastic practices approach.

3. ALSTON'S DOXASTIC APPROACH

According to Alston mystical experience has a perceptual character. It means that by claiming to be aware of God, the subject is claiming to have a perception of God. Alston understands that this relationship of perceiving takes place when the object is presenting itself to a perceiver. This may be direct, without the intermediary of another state of consciousness, as when we are aware of someone ahead of us in person. Thus, in case there is a real perception, that object is not a mere imaginative creation of the subject, the object presents itself.

The experience reports presented by Alston of perceiving the presence of God are not through the five senses but in a way analogous to ‘feeling’ with the soul. Being aware of the presence of God is expressed in analogies like ‘feel waves of liquid love’. Unlike Otto, Alston believes that it is possible to share our mystical experience with others, disagreeing with the idea of it being inexplicable or ineffable, because ‘despite statements like those quoted, our subjects manage to say quite a lot about their experiences and about

what they take themselves to be experiencing' (ALSTON, 1991, p. 32). The subjects who go through these experiences then use analogies for what is hard to explain, but in other times they imply that they are perceptions.

These analogies and terms like "ecstasy, love, delight, bliss", Alston takes as highly affective, but this is due to the difficulty in specifying their non-sensory phenomenal qualities. He does not believe that direct perception of God can take place through affective qualities. Moreover, the phenomenal content is different from the affective ones. In contrast, he argues that the affective character does not prevent the experience of being real. It is subjective, but this does not preclude objective truths.

To grasp a perception of God, we need to define whether it is either of direct or indirect type. An indirect perception is one in which S perceives X through Y, that is, the perceiver depends on an intermediary to be able to have the perception. In direct perception, however, S can perceive X without anything else intermediating.

So, Alston holds that the perception of God is direct. People who reported to have had that kind of experience did not need an intermediary to be able to perceive God. But can we say that this process was immediate? There are three degrees of mediation in perception for him. We have absolute immediacy, in which one is aware of something without any interference or intermediation, even if it is a mental state. There is mediated immediacy where the subject perceives something through a state of consciousness that is different from the thing perceived. Finally, the mediate perception, in that there is awareness of an object through awareness of another object of perception. Based on the presented reports, Alston claims that experiences of God are of the mediated immediacy type because the subjects are aware of the presence of God without anything intermediating. He says: 'to get back to our examples, they all seem to be cases of [mediated immediacy]. Our subjects are quite able to distinguish their states of consciousness from that which they take themselves to be perceiving namely, God.' (ALSTON, 1991, p. 22).

His second argument is about the justification of a perceptual belief. Alston's conception of justification is that it is truth-conducive: 'If being based on putative perceptions of X renders beliefs about X likely to be true, it must be that, in general, such experiences are in the kind of effective contact with facts about X that render them

genuine perceptions of X' (ALSTON, 1991, p. 69). Mystical perception will be then a source of justification for M-beliefs (beliefs about attributes and actions of God, based on a putative perception of God).

Justifications can be mediate or immediate. In the first case, the belief in p is justified by other beliefs that are known or justifiably believed. In the second case, a belief is justified by something apart from beliefs, and the justifiers may be a) the experience responsible for the belief; b) the proposition's self-evidence that holds the beliefs; or c) the propositions believed to be of a certain category. Alston concludes that perceptual beliefs have a mixed-status between mediate and immediate justification (ALSTON, 1991, p. 71).

Starting from the possibility of justification, we are warned that it is important not only finding a justification for a belief but being justified in having that belief in view of a perception. Therefore, we should distinguish whether a subject S is justified in believing p based on his perception. According to Alston, the formation of a perceptual belief is before the evaluation, the subject perceives the object and so believes about the object. In this way, perceiving an object is a relation with it that subject considers as perception or awareness of the object. Moreover, if someone has a perception of a certain object, it means that this object is presenting itself for someone. Consequently, a perceptual belief is based on perception, not on other beliefs, otherwise it would not be a perception, but a thought. Thus, knowing if a source in question is reliable is knowing about the possibility that belief is justified. For this purpose, Alston examines the reliability of a way of forming beliefs that are socially and psychologically established, the sense perception, in several ways, and notices that even this – which we rely upon to know about physical world truths – can go on epistemic circularity. Like when we validate a perceptual belief through the senses. Furthermore, he indicates that similarly the mystical perception and other sources of beliefs could go on epistemic circularity. Since we cannot avoid epistemic circularity in our practices of forming beliefs (our “doxastic practices”) neither we can change our usual way to form beliefs. What is the solution? He endorses that we continue with the doxastic practices, unless there are reasons to disqualify it, i.e., they are innocent until proven guilty.

Doxastic practices are mechanisms that render a belief when an input arises an output. In a particular doxastic practice, there is a unity between these mechanisms because they are similar in their inputs, outputs, and the way the two elements connect. Examples of such mechanisms are perception, memory, introspection, and inferential types of belief forming.

To be a legitimate doxastic practice, it must observe some characteristics:

- 1) A system of belief-forming mechanisms: practices involve a mechanism that has an input that renders an output belief. To work well, it may be able to yield beliefs from input contents. In cognitive psychology it is not clear about what are these mechanisms, nor their range but, epistemically, individual mechanisms are the limit (ALSTON, 1991, p. 156).
- 2) Generational and transformational practices: generational practices are those that generate beliefs from a non-doxastic input but can be the source of new information to a doxastic system. The transformational generates beliefs outputs from belief inputs. A generational practice gives access to a new reality like sense perception gives access to sensorial reality.
- 3) Evaluative side: ways of assessing and correcting beliefs formed. They are results of learning or habit. Through habit, someone has specific ways to come from an input to an output. In each practice there is an “overriding system” of beliefs and procedures with which the subject can test their beliefs according to criteria of that practice. To know that the belief follows the prescribed way may be a mode to evaluate it as *prima facie* justified⁴.
- 4) Mutual involvement of practices: there is a relationship between practices, they are not independent of each other. In practice development, the belief is obtained through the operation of other practices. Further, the transformational practices are dependent on the generational.

⁴ This could encourage us to think about the role of virtues working together with our evaluation being result of a reliable habit or learn.

- 5) Irreducible plurality of practices: there are various modes and principles of justification that are specific to a practice but not related to another one, we may not reduce all practices to some mode of justification common to all.
- 6) Pre-reflective genesis: the most rooted practices are acquired before we are explicitly aware of them to form a critique. The acquisition of a doxastic practice must come before the theory because that is developed with the practice.
- 7) Involvement in wider spheres of practice: in participating in a doxastic practice, we learn about beliefs from a practice in the way of relationship with other beliefs and world aspects.
- 8) Socially established: a doxastic practice must be socially learned and shared. We learn about certain practices through our social relationships.
- 9) Subject to change: it should not be immutable. For example, the overriding system of a practice changes as knowledge about it increases.
- 10) Distinctive presuppositions: each practice must have its own configuration of fundamental presuppositions.

Alston argues that since epistemic circularity seems inevitable, varying only in degrees in all practices (ALSTON, 1991, p. 149), the way out is to act by practical rationality, being rational when forming and evaluating beliefs. Therefore, a practice seems more reasonable if it is socially established and if it is being used (and, as a result, tested) for a long time. To decide which practice is more reliable, we must choose that one more socially established and more fundamental in our doxastic system. Thus, for a practice to be considered more established, it may have a more determined structure, being more important in our lives, having a larger innate base, being more difficult to put aside, and having its principles more supposedly true (ALSTON, 1991, p. 171). If the practice shows itself good enough, more people will engage in that. Besides, it does not mean that a practice must be abandoned just because it cannot be used by everyone totally or in some parts – this is the case of mystical doxastic practices which happen rarely and with few people.

Further, is required for a practice to have internal consistency, that is, the beliefs formed by the practice must be non-contradictory between them. Indeed, various practices have their internal contradictions, however, this is not enough to overthrow a practice, the contradictions must be very relevant and in great quantity. So, to evaluate the practical rationality of a practice it is required an overriding system, a way of the practice to evaluate itself and its beliefs' coherence.

Given Alston's approach to justification of perceptual religious beliefs, the next step is to know if these characteristics can be applied to emotions, considering their similarities with perception.

4. CAN EMOTIONS BE A DOXASTIC PRACTICE?

Given the necessary aspects of a doxastic practice, we can now analyze whether forming beliefs by means of emotions is a reliable practice. Being emotion a pre-reflective phenomenon, which involves mind and body, when a person evaluates the feeling and the situation and when she feels bodily effects, we can recognize it and relate it with the world. First, we can say that emotion in this sense has a system of belief-forming mechanisms, the existence of an input and output mechanism of forming beliefs. From what we feel, we can recognize a certain situation. We can be judged as having an appropriate emotional belief when we feel sad in a grief situation, for instance. Second, in emotions there are beliefs produced in a non-doxastic way that contribute to new material, for example, a belief from an emotional source teaches us about our internal world and how this affects us. In third place, there is an evaluative side in the way we create beliefs with emotions, since we can also evaluate and correct beliefs from emotion. In a way more personal, we can evaluate the circumstances, as we can know about our personal values or interests about that occasion⁵. Fourth, on involvement with other practices, emotion can be worked with memory, when we remember something and it brings back the emotion felt or when the subject sees what is, apparently, for instance, his girlfriend with another guy and thus he feels jealous, but use his sense perceptions to confirm whether it is her; in the negative case, he can conclude that the emotional belief

⁵ Reminding that emotion has its evaluative aspect when the subject can recognize their bodily symptoms and relate with current situation. It is a relation between the inner and outer world.

formed was false. Fifth, about the irreducibility to other practices, emotion has its own principles, for we know through feeling or bodily changes which emotion we are having. There is no need to explain emotional experiences by sense perception all the time, since it embraces many truths about the physical world but does not include all possibilities about the internal and subjective world of someone. Similarly, emotion is also not reducible to inference, that is limited to give us specific propositional information. Sixth, the aspect of having a pre-reflective genesis is also present in emotion. We feel emotion even before we can rationalize about it. When children, we cannot evaluate our emotions, but we can react correctly to events, like feeling frustration on a disappointing event. Seventh, emotion also engages with wider spheres of practice, since memory or even sense perception may confirm or refute an emotion we feel. For example, when we remember something that gives us a pleasant emotion, we can believe that that moment gave us something good⁶. Being angry makes us have a memory permeated by anger, with a biased interpretation that we would not have in the case of neutrality. Eight, being socially established, emotion is taught to us through the coexistence with other human beings. From our social life, we learn that certain actions cause certain disturbances. It is through collective learning that we know that it is expected to feel happy with good news rather than regret. As we learn that a disaster requires from us a grief emotion not euphoria. These learnings are socially shared and vary according to the group in which we live. In some cultures, death is not felt as much sorrow as in others. Ninth, emotional reactions are not immutable, since if we find incoherence, we may be open to reevaluating the occasion and its result. This is evident by the possibility of educating our emotions. Through other pieces of information, we can understand a given emotion at a certain moment. Lastly, the distinctive presuppositions characteristic of doxastic practices are present in emotion, since we can trust in our emotions and notice that the world either fits with that or not.

According to these previous criteria, emotion seems to be reliable as a doxastic practice, given that it fulfils the requirements for it. However, we need to assess whether an emotion belief is correct or not, which requires further evaluation. Thus, if the practice needs to follow practical rationality, being socially established and having an overriding

⁶ Perhaps we can think about the power of memory to bring back emotions, in this case the object is present only in mind and we can feel everything again only by remembering it.

system, in order to evaluate the extent to which its outputs are justified, we need to acknowledge what is right or not in terms of emotions epistemologically speaking. In such a complicated issue, an emotion belief can be epistemologically correct if it matches with the thoughts about the object or with the physical world. In the same way, Linda Zagzebski (2014, p. 169) believes that the falseness or truth of an emotion belief is about its match or fitting with the world, becoming appropriate. She considers this may be a circular justification, but it can be better conducted with ‘epistemic self-trust’, i.e., trust in your emotion dispositions. In this way, to know if an emotion belief is true or false involves judgment, to evaluate if the response to a situation is appropriate. Due to this, Martha Nussbaum (2001, p. 47), prefers to use terms like ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’ and ‘mistaken’ when its content is false. We will adopt this terminology.

If we conclude that an appropriate emotion is that one that matches with the world or the thought, we can use this to have the guidelines for an overriding system. To be reliable to form beliefs through emotions, we need to be able to sort the right beliefs from the wrong ones. In addition, we can assess the emotion doxastic practice through the evaluation of its internal consistency. If we have internal contradictions in the emotional belief forming system, we have to notice whether the beliefs formed in the same occasion and by the same emotion previously are now different. The internal contradiction of emotions is challenging. It seems possible to have two contradictory emotions at the same time: feel fear and courage, for instance. Or, as in Otto’s example, the feelings of trembling and *fascinans*, to feel both afraid and attracted. Or as Catullus: ‘I hate and love. You wonder, perhaps, why I'd do that? / I have no idea. I just feel it. I am crucified’ (CATULLUS, 2005, p. 191).

Still, even if the object is the same, the cause may be different. It is possible to love someone for their good characteristics and hate the bad ones. In the same way, the character of emotions giving exaggerated or distorted beliefs due to its proximity and partiality may be evaluated by the contradiction with other practices. For example, when we evaluate a situation based on emotion, we may afterwards reason better, and then we notice that it was an inconsistent conclusion. It is not the end to emotion to be revised from the view of another practice. In the same way, we may use emotion to confirm beliefs formed from other practices. If memory is not precise but causes certain emotions, it is valuable to analyze the memory belief under this practice.

By engaging emotion allied to inferential practices, we can understand the value of a situation to us. Noticing whether the event is pleasant or not we can learn about the meaning of this event. For example, we can trust in our emotion of fear if we are truly facing a dangerous animal. This way we are using self-support provided by the emotion doxastic practice in order to have an additional reason to rely on this way of forming beliefs. So, acknowledging that kind of information about the way we form beliefs through emotions we have an indirect confirmation of other beliefs formed from it.

As Alston faces objections about mystical practice, we may examine if some of them are also faced by the emotion practice. The first one is about the possibility of universal use of the Christian mystical practice (CMP). Whereas CMP cannot be used by everyone, because it is rare, the emotion practice does not face the same problem. Emotion is something present in almost every human being, due to this everyone can recognize when someone is living an emotional experience; in the same way, we learn throughout life the appropriateness of emotion facing an event.

The second objection is about the idea that all mystical perceptual practices must follow the same rules of the sense perception practice, which Alston calls “epistemic imperialism”. In the case of emotion, it would also be required that this practice works like the sense perception practice (SP). But, in the same way that SP has its limits or contradictions, emotion faces them too.

Unlikely the Christian mystical practice, the emotion practice is not difficult to be tested. Nowadays, we can replicate events and reproduce the emotions related. We can inquire how emotion works in the brain or bodily responses. And this says a lot about them. António Damásio (2012) develops the understanding that emotions work with and are important to make decisions or engage with the world or other people. This means that emotion is a door to the world, we are able in our relationship with it by means of emotions to understand certain aspects of our lives, which we would not grasp otherwise. In addition, emotion cannot be excluded completely from the cognitive process, at the risk of not being linked with the world or social life, and most exactly, the decision-making.

5. APPLICATION TO RELIGIOUS EMOTIONS

Yet even if we at this stage agree that emotions can be reliable as a ground of justification for many beliefs, we still need to think about religious emotions. Due to limits of space, I will put forward my argument in just a schematic way. From Otto's approach it is possible to conclude that the experience of "seeing" God, or meeting Him, is activated by information of feeling a certain emotion, like the distinctive fear or awe. To acknowledge that something divine is in your presence comes through the understanding that a certain emotion gives that information. From this, we can trust that our experience is real because only this specific object can provoke in us this specific emotion.

United with other elements to analyze the actuality of experience, like the resulting behavior – being internally modified and changing your life or/and strengthening of your faith – emotion can indicate which object is present. Through inference, we know that certain aspects are related to the object, despite thinking about only the rational ones, but knowing that only this object may give you that emotion. The creature-feeling cannot come from an encounter with another creature, since it is specific of the relation between the numinous and creature. You feel yourself as so distinct and different from this object, and by this feeling this you know that it has a supreme presence, in which only you are the 'dust and ashes'.

CONCLUSION

In view of this, we can conclude that the meeting with the holy enables distinctive emotional attitudes. If you see yourself in front of something immeasurable, that puts you in a creature position, to feel this, in addition to it, the feeling of trembling and admiration. If it is reliable doxastic practice, it gives prima facie justification for a belief formed through it. In other words, formed in the right way, according to many religious emotion doxastic ways of forming beliefs, it can provide a prima facie justification for the corresponding belief. This would be a partial and defeasible contribution to the rationality of religious beliefs. Even with such modest claim, we believe this proposal is innovative

in seeing religious emotion as not necessarily irrational, but as a possible source of rational belief as well.

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